

Should we breed from our dog?

There are lots of factors to consider before deciding on trying for puppies. Please consider carefully!



Why do we want puppies?

Having puppies can be a wonderful experience, but it can also be a very stressful and expensive time! The majority of people who have a litter of puppies do not make a profit from doing so.

A bitch does not “need” to have a litter of puppies; it does not make them healthier or happier. It is certainly not a cure for behaviour problems.

Not having your bitch neutered (spayed) at an early age means that she will be at risk of pyometra (a nasty infection in the womb) and at a much increased risk of mammary neoplasia (breast cancer). You will also have to put up with the mess of your bitch being in season twice yearly and the possibility of phantom pregnancies.

Do I have the time?

Expect a couple of sleepless nights waiting for puppies to arrive, and do be aware of the possibility of needing to feed puppies every 2 hours if there are any problems either with an extra-large litter, lack of milk from mum, or illness of either mum or pups. Can you or another responsible adult be present 24 hours a day for the first 3 weeks in case hand feeding is needed?

Do I have the space?

A litter of puppies takes up a lot of space, especially by the time they get to 8 weeks old. They also produce a lot of poo so expect loads of washing!

Will I be able to find good homes for the puppies?

There are no guarantees as to how many puppies your bitch will have – it could be anywhere between 0 and 17! Certain breeds will be easier to find homes for than others. Friends that say they would love to have a puppy don't always end up being able to. There are a large number of unwanted dogs out there – try and make sure you are not contributing to their numbers. You will need to carefully screen potential homes to make sure that your puppy will not end up as another statistic in a rescue centre.



Irish Setter bitch with 15 puppies

Can I afford it?

Do you have money set aside in case the dam or puppies need emergency care? Pregnancy and puppies are not usually in themselves expensive, but please remember that most pet insurance does not cover for pregnancy and related illness. There is around a 5% chance that your dog will need to have a caesarean section, which can be costly (especially in the middle of the night). Add to this stud fees, time off work, vets' fees, blood tests to time mating, ultrasound, vaccinations, worming, milk replacer, extra food for mum and puppies and a whelping box, and having a litter of puppies can mount up to a sizeable sum. And that's without any complications!

Is my dog suitable to breed from?

- Temperament – it is better not to breed from overly nervous or aggressive dogs
- Medical conditions – does your dog have any medical conditions which may either put her at risk during pregnancy (e.g. heart disease) or be passed on to the puppy (e.g. epilepsy)?
- Conformation – is your dog's conformation suitable for breeding? If they have trouble breathing because of a very flat face, or trouble walking because of oddly shaped legs, breeding may not be a good idea.
- Breed specific conditions – for many pedigree breeds there are schemes in place to reduce the incidence of certain conditions. For example Labradors need to have their hips x-rayed and assessed before their puppies can be registered. Some schemes are compulsory, some are suggested. The kennel club website has lots of information about this www.thekennelclub.org.uk.
- Ease of giving birth – if the mother of your bitch had an easy birth without caesarean section, your own bitch is less likely to need one. Certain breeds have a higher likelihood of needing a caesarean section.
- Weight – if your dog is very overweight it is worth getting her down to a healthy weight before breeding.
- Age – ideally we would not advise breeding until after the third season, and if she hasn't had a litter by the age of six it is probably not a good idea to start.

Can I find a good stud dog?

All of the requirements for a good mum also apply to finding a dog to sire the puppies. Finding a good stud dog may require travelling, especially if looking for certain breeds. Both parents should contribute excellent health, temperament, working ability or conformity to the breed standard.

Still think you want puppies?

Please feel free to come in for a chat with one of the vets or nurses so we can go over any questions you may have. If you do decide to breed then we will of course support you all the way.