

The Truth About Breeding Your Dog

The Truth About Breeding Your Dog

By Lorena Patti

You have an awesome dog. Absolutely- she's gorgeous, she's brilliant, she's an absolute sweetheart, and a great guard dog to boot. Beauty, Brains, and Brawn- she's got it all. So, you think it's a great idea to breed her. Before you do, you may want to read on- there is a lot more to breeding than what many think. Make sure that if you do dive in, you do so with your eyes wide open.

If you find that what is written here is not news to you, and you know that you can handle the tremendous responsibility that comes with breeding, then all the best to you in this adventure. You have the best wishes on your side. There is a wonderful community of breeders and veterinarians out there ready to help with their knowledge and experience. Don't be shy about seeking their advice at any point.

Why?

First of all, make sure you understand why you want to breed her. So... why do you want to breed her?

1. We want the kids to witness the "Miracle of Birth"

This is a noble cause. Children will learn a lot by witnessing an event of this magnitude. They may learn just how valuable and precious life is.

Puppy Survival Rate:

The children may also learn how heartbreaking this process can turn out as well. Consider that on average, it is expected that 25% of puppies in a litter will not survive. Are the children who will witness this psychologically prepared to deal with this happening? Are you?

Complications with the Mom:

Keep in mind that giving birth, while common, is still a risky and dangerous event. Chances are that the mom will give birth at home, and not at the vet's clinic. There is a very real possibility that complications may arise with the birthing process- breeders are quite familiar with the mad dash to the emergency veterinary clinic in the middle of the night in order to save the mom and/or the puppies. Make sure that the children that are learning about the miracle of birth will be able to handle something like this happening.

After the Birth:

You need to ask yourself if you have the time and energy to help the mom take care of the pups. What if the mom cannot take care of the pups? This is a very real possibility. If

this happens do you have the time and energy to take care of them 24 hours a day, 7 days a week? You will need to stay up with them, hand-feed them every 2 hours for the first few weeks of their lives, keep them warm, and clean the whelping box of their refuse (like all babies- what goes in, must come out...). You may also have to be the one rubbing their genitals with a cotton ball to get them to potty. Did you know that this is only one of the many things a mom dog needs to do?

But wait- there's more!

At about 4 weeks of age, it is important to start getting the puppies used to people. After all, people are the ones that the puppies will wind up living with. You will have to socialize them to people, and you will have to make sure you do this right. If the puppies don't have the right start in life with people, their chances of finding a permanent home will be minimal.

Once the Lesson is Over, the Responsibility Continues...

Are you willing to take back any and all of the dogs from the litter, at any point in their lives? We all know that not all dogs will remain in the family that first takes them home. The cute little puppy will grow into a dog. For many, once this happens, the enchantment of the dog goes away. Many an owner will not realize the 10-15 year commitment that comes with owning a dog. If that owner no longer wants one of your puppies, it may end up in the pound unless you are willing to take the dog back.

If you don't take the dogs back if they are no longer wanted, you need to realize that you may very well be handing those dogs their death sentence- one that could be executed through no fault of their own. Keep in mind that the children who you are trying to give a priceless lesson to will still be learning. Think of the lesson on responsibility the children could learn from you.

Is this harsh? Yes, it is. However, as a breeder, you have to be aware of all of this.

2. This is an excellent business venture- at \$500.00 per pup, I can make good money.

Kudos to you for having an enterprising spirit. Like any other business venture, you need to do your research to make sure this is a good business to get into.

The truth is breeding isn't a good business venture. If all goes well, you will either break even, or have a minimal profit margin. You certainly will not get rich from this venture.

Here are some of the costs that you'll have as a breeder:

COMMON COSTS:

1. Stud Fee

2. Tools of the Trade

- a. Whelping box
- b. Heating pad
- c. Heat lamps
- d. Thermometer
- e. Scissors
- f. Towels
- g. Baby weight scales
- h. Tweezers
- i. Hemostats
- j. Baby suction cups
- k. Sterilizing solution
- l. Nail clippers

3. Feeding Tools

- a. Milk replacement formula and/or goat's milk
- b. Baby bottles
- c. Tubes for tube feeding
- d. Food for mom

4. Medicine

- a. Puppy wormer (to be given at 2, 4, 6, & 8 weeks)
- b. Puppy diarrhea medicine

5. Veterinary costs

- a. Veterinary checks and health tests for the mom (and dad possibly) before mating
 - i. OFA for hips
 - ii. OFA for elbows
 - iii. OFA for patellas
 - iv. CERF
 - v. Gonioscopy
- b. Vaccinations for the puppies (this is more than once, too)
- c. Eye certifications for the puppies
- d. If not all puppies are sold:
 - i. Neuter/spay the dogs
 - ii. Full set of vaccinations
 - iii. Training to improve the placement of the pups
- e. Emergency vet trips
 - i. C-section/any other unforeseen medical complications for the mom
 - ii. To save the life of a dying puppy
- f. Antibiotics for mom to treat things like Mastitis
- g. Any other medicines the mom may need

6. Other Responsibilities

- a. Time off from work to help the mom- plan on at least 5 days
- b. Advertising to sell the pups
- c. Managing phone calls from interested and not-so-interested potential buyers
- d. Arrange for multiple visits from potential buyers
- e. Socializing the pups
- f. Help the newborns urinate and defecate if the mom can't or won't

g. Clean up puppy excrement from inside your house: the puppies cannot be kept outside due to diseases that their developing systems cannot cope with yet. They'll need to be kept at a constant temperature of 85 degrees Fahrenheit.

h. Taking any and all pups back if the buyers don't want them for any reason. This includes physical and/or behavioral problems.

i. Be available to answer any questions from buyers for the life of the puppies that you sell them.

7. Emotional Cost

a. You can lose your dog from complications during pregnancy or birth

b. You can lose most if not all puppies- this can actually happen

A Word on Puppy Mills

You may be wondering about those who do make a decent living out of this business. Many of them provide pet stores with the cute puppies you see in their windows. For the most part, those who make a good profit out of this represent one of the ugliest sides of the pet industry. They are commonly known as owners of puppy mills. This is a subject that you should most definitely read up on.

Puppy mills are just that: they turn out litter after litter of puppies.

The females are bred as soon as they reach their first season. And they are bred every season after that. This is not a healthy practice for the mom. To find out about how this affects the lifespan of the bitch, talk to a veterinarian about it. You will understand how this can shorten the lifespan of the bitch.

Because these folks are in this for the business, they give little to no regard to their breeding stock. In most of these operations, the breeding animals are kept in abhorrent living conditions. Puppy mill raids (yes, they do take place) have uncovered dogs living in crates stacked on top of each other- the dogs in the lower crates having the excrement of their upstairs neighbors rain down on them. Most, if not all, of the dogs have never been out of their crates, except to mate. Dogs rescued by these raids are so unused to human contact that they just lay down in fear when they were picked up to be bathed and checked by veterinarians.

Please do some research on this subject so that you can understand how turning this into a business can go very, very wrong.

So, why breed at all?

Most breeders are dedicated individuals that are in this for the love of the breed. They research who they will breed their dogs to. They look at their own dogs and make the most objective decision they can as to whether they are good candidates to pass genes on to the next generation. They take care to not only make a good match on the physical side

of things- they also make sure that the right temperament has a great chance to be passed on to future generations. Breeders are experts in their breeds. They can recognize a good candidate for breeding, and will be able to spot those of “pet” quality- dogs that are wonderful, gorgeous, smart, and have wonderful temperaments- but that they know have even minute flaws that could damage the breed if passed on.

Most breeders are wonderful individuals, professionals that provide a lifetime of support to their clients and the puppies they sell. They remember their litters, and receive pictures and emails from the owners as the years fly by. They rejoice when they see “their” puppies living happy, healthy lives, and will not bat an eye when taking one of them back if the owner can no longer care for him or her.

Most breeders become an extended family member to the owners of the puppies. And nothing will make a breeder happier than the knowledge that their pups are in loving, caring homes.

In conclusion...

If you are prepared to handle the responsibility that comes with being a breeder, congratulations. You are entering a group of dedicated, responsible, and very special people. May you have success, healthy puppies, happy moms, and new doggie owners that are madly in love with their new bundles of joy for life.

REFERENCES:

1. Anderson, Jane; Learn to Breed; <http://www.learntobreed.com>
2. Before You Breed; http://www.mydog8it.com/before_you_breed.htm
3. Johnson, Jane; Costs; <http://www.geocities.com/heartland/flats/7244/costs.html>
4. Johnson, Jane; Questions for the Potential Breeder; <http://www.geocities.com/learntobreed/questions.html>
5. Miller, Joyce; <http://www.jubileaires.com/dearjubileebreeding.htm>
6. Puppy Mills; http://www.mydog8it.com/puppy_mills.htm
7. Welcome to the World of Virtual Breeding; <http://www.geocities.com/virtualbreeding>

The preceding article was compiled by Lorena B. Patti, IACP. *
Copyright 2004

Copyright© IACP - www.DogPro.org
[bayView Internet Group, LLC design and hosting services](#)