

# SO . . . YOU WANT A LITTER OF PUPPIES

## WHY??

***"To make a lot of money."***

Do you realize the expenses involved in such items as advertising, stud fee, vet bills, food, etc., to name a few?

***"Because it would be good for the children to watch the birth and play with the puppies as they grow up."***

Actually, the gory parts of the whelping repulse most children, who are all too anxious to just skip viewing the miracle of birth you planned for them to see.

And, a litter growing up is too rowdy for most small children, who are usually totally disinterested or absolutely terrified of the leaping creatures with the sharp nails and teeth.

If you want the children to see a puppy grow up, it's better to buy them just one of their own.

If you want them to watch a litter being born, it's better and easier to find a breeder who will let them get up in the middle of the night to come over and watch the litter being helped.

***"Because we love Fido and want one just like her."***

The chances that you will get one "just like her" are slim indeed.

***"Because everyone who comes to the house sees Fido and wants a puppy when she has a litter."***

But...just wait till your litter of 12 is ready to go to their now homes; watch all those people back out with a myriad of excuses like:

"The kids aren't old enough yet."

"The kids are too old now to be bothered taking care of a dog."

"We are going to have a baby."

"The house is too small."

"We'll be moving in 3 months - wait till then." (But your puppy is ready now.)

"The rug is too new."

"Grandma doesn't like dogs."

"Our old dog didn't die yet."

"It might not get along with the cat."

and the list goes on and on.

***"Because we really love little puppies."***

You'd better be sure you REALLY love them, because until you have them, you can't fully imagine how much is involved, such as:

THE MESS a litter makes - Can you put up with the cleaning that is constantly involved in caring for a litter? There is no way to explain how tired you get of scrubbing up after the puppies, their whelping box, the yard, kennel, or wherever they're kept. They dump their food and water the minute you put it down, step in it, roll in it, and drag it through whatever else may be in the puppy box; and with six, or eight, or ten puppies, there's always something else to be cleaned up, too.

THE RESPONSIBILITY you will have with a litter - It's not as easy as Fido having the litter and taking care of them till they're ready to go. Most of it is up to you, and you're tied to the litter like any new mother, only you can't take the litter with you to your in-laws for the weekend, or anywhere else for the weekend for that matter, so you'd better be content to spend all your time at home. There can't be any day-long shopping sprees or anything that takes you away from home for too long, because you'll have to be there to feed the puppies four times every day.

Now that you have some idea of what's involved other than playing with cute, cuddly little puppies and you're still determined to go ahead anyway, here's something else that should be considered:

***Is your bitch of quality to breed?***

- Do you know her faults as well as her virtues?
- Does she meet with the standard of her breed?
- Is she of desirable temperament?
- Is she of sound health?

***Do you have customers so you won't have to sell the puppies at a price below their value or take them to a shelter??***

If you can answer "Yes" to the above and you haven't lost the determination to try your hand at raising a litter, then read on:

Get an opinion of your bitch from a few breeders. Find out what they think are her faults and virtues.

Learn about any problems that are within your breed (such as Hip Dysplasia, PRA, etc.) Study the breed standard yourself so that you are familiar with it when looking at and evaluating possible stud dogs.

Get several breeders' opinions of a good choice for a stud dog that will enhance your bitch.

Go to see as many of the stud dogs and their offspring as you can. If you are a novice, you may feel safer breeding your bitch to a champion because in most cases he is a proven good representative of his breed.

Be sure the stud dog is clear of breed problems (such as HD, PRA).

After you've decided on a stud dog, take your bitch to the vet. (\$\$)

Have her X-rayed, if this has not yet been done.

Have her checked for hereditary eye defects.

If there are any other special problems within your breed, have her examined to be sure she is free of them.

She should have a general health check-up, and the vet will let you know if any vitamin supplements are necessary. This examination should include checks for the following:

- Worms (take along a stool sample)
- Heartworm
- Brucellosis
- Shots up to date?

Don't forget, all this is going to cost money, but it's a necessary part of planning for a healthy litter!

Now, while you wait for her to come in season, READ all you can - on your particular breed, breeding, whelping, and rearing young puppies. Start saving all your newspapers and have your friends and relatives do the same (Remember what we told you about all that clean up? You'll be needing all the newspapers you can get your hands on!) have a whelping box built, or if you are handy, build one yourself. (Another expense - \$\$).

When your bitch comes in season:

Contact the stud owner with whom you have previously made arrangements regarding the breeding, and you will be advised when to bring your bitch.

Plan to pay the stud fee at the time of breeding. (\$\$)

There may also be a boarding charge if your bitch is to stay with the stud dog's owner. (\$\$)

Be sure you understand in advance just what the payment of the stud fee is guaranteeing.

The suitable stud for your bitch may be some distance away, involving in addition to the stud and boarding fees, additional costs for transportation expenses. (\$\$) Getting your bitch bred isn't always as easy as you might imagine and may require repeated trips to the stud dog.

After your bitch is bred, you have 63 days to do more reading and thinking (and laced in with the good thoughts about the precious little darlings will have to be some horrible thoughts about what can go wrong and how much it can cost you. both financially and emotionally. We hate to

keep dwelling on this, but things do go wrong occasionally and you should be prepared in case it happens to you.

What if your bitch has problems and requires a Cesarean section or other extensive vet services (\$\$)

What if the puppies die? (\$\$)

What if she is not in whelp, or has a miscarriage? (\$\$)

What if you weren't careful enough when she was in season and your Irish Setter whelps, let's say, black and white spotted and grey puppies? (\$\$)

What are you going to do with ten six-month-old puppies that you can't, sell, give away, or have the heart to put to sleep? Do you have adequate facilities?

What if your bitch can't - or won't - nurse the puppies? Are you prepared to tube feed them every two hours for the next three weeks?

And, worst of all, what if Fido dies while whelping, or afterwards? Will it have been worth it?

The days pass, and Fido whelps her puppies without any problems, but you still want to take her to the vet to be checked. She will probably get hormone and antibiotic injections to prevent any infection. (\$\$)

Lucky for you, Fido whelped ten healthy puppies. They are almost eight weeks old and just about ready to sell, but first, they all have to make a trip to the vet. (\$\$)

Their six-week checkup will probably include shots and a check for worms, with medication if necessary. (10 puppies times \$X/puppy = \$\$\$)

Now that you know they're healthy and ready to go, you wanted a breeder to see just how gorgeous they are and how great you did your first try (of course, you think they're all show quality and worth show prices). But again be prepared, because you might hear (some breeders are painfully honest and think that when you ask for an opinion, you want the truth, so they give it to you straight):

The big male has only one testicle.

The next biggest male toes out badly (but has both testicles).

The really pretty bitch has an improper bite.

The smaller bitch has the proper bite, but her topline is bad.

The bitch with the pretty head is cowhocked.

There are *three who* are "average" nothing really wrong, but nothing outstanding, either.

And, there's one who is definitely show quality, a real beauty.

The "show quality" one is the puppy you were going to keep just as a pet because the kids liked it best (another mouth to feed - \$\$) and you're really feeling down at the breeder's opinion of your litter. But you're told to cheer up - after all, one really outstanding puppy is better than a lot

of others get out of a litter, and you should consider this a successful breeding! (some consolation when you were going to sell them all as show puppies!)

Now you have your litter graded and priced accordingly and are ready to sell them:

By this time, are you knowledgeable enough about your breed to be the expert every buyer assumes you are?

Are you prepared to answer training questions, housebreaking questions, feeding questions, grooming questions, etc.? (As for grooming, if you are selling a heavily coated breed, detailed grooming instructions and a demonstration are essential, so that the buyer knows what he's getting into and will be able to properly care for his puppy as the coat grows.)

And, are you prepared to answer these questions not only at the time of purchase, but months later, when someone calls at midnight because the dog isn't eating right?

Can you direct your buyers to obedience classes, breed handling classes, help them get into showing, recommend a vet in their area or a groomer? Remember, you are now the breeder, and your responsibility doesn't end when the puppy is carried out the door.

Do you have a pedigree ready to go with each puppy, as well as his registration form?

Are you prepared to advertise extensively (\$\$) if necessary? If you have a good bitch and have bred to a stud dog owned by an interested breeder, the breeder will usually send referrals to you, but don't depend on others to sell your puppies, and advertising expenses can really add up.

Don't expect the buyers to flock to your door the day your puppies are ready to go. It may take weeks, or even months, before they are all sold (and this results in lots of food costs and possibly more trips to the vet for their shots.)

We hope that if you do breed your bitch, you do it the right way and only for the right reasons and put lots of time, thought, and love into your decision. There are too many unwanted puppies put to sleep each year due to irresponsible and ignorant breeding. Don't let any puppies of yours end up this way!

**THINK BEFORE YOU BREED!**

Lehigh Valley Kennel Club, Inc.