

DOG FOSTER PROGRAM FOSTER COMMUNICATIONS

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOUR PREGNANT FOSTER DOG IS EXPECTING

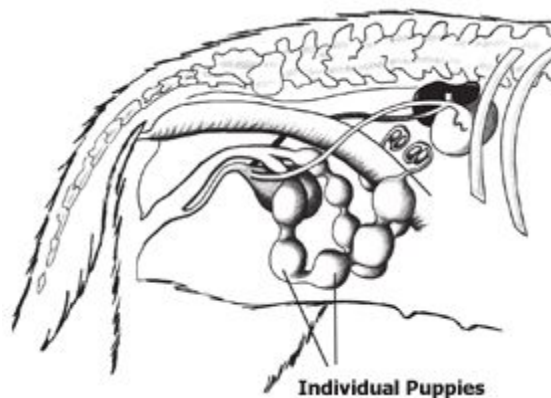
Thank you for fostering a pregnant dog. If you have never had experience with a pregnant dog that delivered puppies in your home, this document will hopefully help answer your questions and provide you with helpful information for your foster dog's delivery and afterwards. Please make note of these important APA! contact emails:

Dog Foster Care (DFC) Team: dog-foster-care@austinpetslive.org

APA! Medical Team: medicalreception@austinpetsalive.org; in an emergency, please call 512-466-0720 (during Clinic hours 10:30AM-6:30PM) or 1-888-733-8840 (after hours/on call)

Pregnant Dog Anatomy

Here is a picture of the pregnant female dog reproductive tract. You will immediately notice that a pregnant dog has a different anatomy than a pregnant human. The puppies are in separate sacs that appear like a cluster of grapes and pass



individually through the dog's birth canal.

Before Birth:

- Treat as you would any other dog – plenty of food, water, and trips outside to go potty. She won't normally be up to long walks, but may enjoy a short stroll. Pregnant dogs sleep a LOT.
- Feed dry puppy food, feel free to also give wet food if you want.
- One study has found that pregnant dogs who are well loved and get lots of belly rubs while pregnant give birth to more well-adjusted puppies. We don't know if that's true, but we encourage you to go totally overboard on the love – as much as mama will tolerate!
- You may notice some clear/cloudy discharge after/while mama potties – this is totally normal and a sign that you might be getting closer to birth day. If the discharge is any other color, you probably want to contact the Clinic to get their opinion.

How do I know if my dog has gone into labor?

While some dogs will differ, a pregnant dog that is going into labor will typically begin looking for a place to have her puppies. She may start digging in the yard or try to hide in a place where her puppies will be protected. If you notice your dog is trying to get under bushes or dig a hole, she may be nesting. It may be helpful for you to take her out on a leash to potty - especially if your foster dog is large and will be too heavy for you to move if she goes into labor while hiding. Most dogs will stop eating and refuse food or even vomit. Some will pant heavily, and if a place is ready for her she may go into the whelping area (see below). There is also a temperature method – take mama’s temperature twice daily at the same time every day, recording the temperatures. It should be about 100 – 102 degrees. Once you see a sharp drop, below 98 degrees, pups should be born within 24 hours. However, this totally varies based on the dog – some dogs just run a lower temperature and it makes it hard to tell.

What kind of place should I make for my dog to have her puppies?

The ideal whelping area is an enclosure that momma dog can easily step out of but has sides that are high enough to keep the puppies contained for at least the first few weeks. At APA!, we use the blue plastic “kiddie” swimming pools. These are usually available at our Town Lake Animal Center (TLAC) location. If not, they can be purchased at most large discount stores, in season, or at pet stores. These pools work well for most dogs but if you have a very small dog then you may need to use something even smaller. The whelping box or pool should be placed in a low-traffic, quiet part of your home where the momma dog will feel more secure. If you have a utility room, spare bedroom, or bathroom that is ideal. Do not put her in a garage or other external area unless it is climate controlled. If you cannot put the momma and pups in a separate room, put them in a quiet space in your home. You can also use a X-pen around the delivery area to keep others away from the momma and her pups. The X-pen can also be surrounded with sheets so that the momma feels more hidden and secure. Keep all other pets away from the momma and her pups. After giving birth momma may be very protective of her new family. Because other animals and people getting too close may create stress for the momma she may growl or show other warning signs to stay away. If this behavior is severe enough to be of concern, please contact the Behavior Team at dogbehaviorfollowup@austinpetsalive.org with a “Time Sensitive” subject line and copy the Dog Foster Manager at dog-foster-manager@austinpetsalive.org.

What supplies should I have on hand for delivery?

Before momma dog delivers you should gather a few items that will be helpful during the delivery or for the aftercare. These include:

- Large bottle of hand sanitizer. You can use this during delivery when needed and keep it handy for visitors to sanitize their hands before touching or handling the pups. Note: As the puppies get older, socialization is very important (see also [Puppy Socialization](#)), but when they are newborns try to limit the amount of handling that is done by strangers.
- Newspapers and puppy pee pads to help absorb some of the discharge during delivery and to use once the puppies get a little bigger.
- Old towels and old blankets can also be used in the whelping box or pool while

the momma delivers and then washed with laundry soap and bleach.

- Scale to weigh the puppies to be sure they are gaining weight. This can be a food scale since most puppies will weigh less than a pound when born. You can use a bowl to contain the pup while you weigh it. Just be sure the scale is zeroed out with the bowl on the scale when you put the puppy into the bowl. You don't want to include the weight of bowl in the puppy's weight.
- Bottle of bleach to add to the laundry when washing the towels or blankets.
- Baby wipes will help to clean up small messes or wipe off the puppies after they are a few days old. Just be sure the puppies do not get cold.
- Heating pad to keep puppies warm. It should be used on the low setting and be covered with a towel. Note: It is very important that the momma and pups are kept warm and away from drafts or fans. Normally momma's body temperature will keep the puppies warm enough, but if you need to move them from momma the heating pad can be useful. Make sure the puppies are NEVER placed directly on the heating pad.

What happens during delivery?

Nature is amazing, and your foster dog will know what to do during the delivery of her pups. You may notice contractions before a puppy is delivered. There is no need to touch the dog while she is having contractions. Puppies can be delivered anywhere from a few minutes to 2 hours apart. It's completely normal for momma to be tired, panting, and uncomfortable after giving birth, and bloody vaginal discharge is also to be expected. If Mom becomes too exhausted to lift her head to care for the pups or seems to be in distress, check her gum color. Gums should be bubble gum pink. If they are white or gray, contact the Clinic's emergency line immediately. In addition, if you observe any of the following, please contact the Clinic's emergency line immediately:

- Mom is hemorrhaging blood (bloody discharge is normal, but bright red streams of blood from her vulva is not).
- Mom is unable to stand or fainting.
- Mom is screaming or moaning in pain.

For delivery-related matters, please limit your use of the Clinic's emergency line to the specific matters above. If you suspect that mom may still have pups inside but she isn't showing any of these signs of distress, please contact the Clinic at 512-466-0720 during open hours and a vet will be able to check her out. For non-emergency questions about latching, nursing etc., please contact the DFC Team.

During the delivery of each pup the mom will do everything necessary. She will tear the sac with her teeth and pull and chew on the umbilical cord. You might feel like the momma dog is being too rough with the pups but this is normal, and there is no need to interfere with the process unless momma is not doing what is necessary, e.g., if she does not tear/clear the sac, you will need to do so per the section below. Momma will eat the placenta and delivery sac. She will lick the puppy to get it clean, and this will stimulate the puppy to breathe and begin to move around to find a place to latch onto one of the momma's teats.

What should I do to help my dog?

In general, your job during delivery is minimal. Basically, you just observe to make sure everything is going well and the momma does not appear to be having difficulty with the delivery. Once the puppies are born just watch them to make sure all are “wiggly” and starting to nurse. If you have questions or feel like something might be wrong, contact the Clinic to answer your questions or provide you with further directions.

If something is going wrong, you may need to intervene to help. This is rare but if momma does not do any post-delivery care - clearing the sac, cutting the cord, licking the puppy to get it to breathe, etc. - you may need to help her. If any of the pups are left with their head still in the sac and seem limp, you may need to intervene and clean away the sac, rub them gently with a warm damp cloth to clean them off, and stimulate them. If necessary you can use a bulb syringe to clear their throat and blow into their mouth a few times. Once they start moving put them on momma’s teat to nurse. Although this sounds very scary, remember that in nature, or if momma was alone, the puppies would likely not survive in this situation. So anything you do is likely to help save their lives. At the same time also remember that it is not uncommon for some puppies to not survive. Some may be stillborn or die shortly after birth. Just providing a warm, safe place for momma to deliver has already increased their chances of survival!

How should I care for the puppies?

Your interaction with the puppies should be minimal. The most important thing is to watch to see that each of them is moving and has started nursing.

As the puppies are born, note the date and time of each puppy’s birth. This will be helpful information for the APA! Medical Team as you can tell them exactly how old the puppy is - in hours or minutes. Weigh each puppy as soon after delivery as possible, but wait at least 2 hours after momma has stopped laboring. Note the color of the puppy and any special markings for each puppy so you can tell them apart. Taking a picture of each puppy can also help you keep track of them. Once you have weighed the puppy, put it back near the momma and watch to be sure it starts to nurse. Record the information and then move on to the next puppy until you are finished with each puppy. Using a spreadsheet during the delivery can be helpful, especially if your momma dog has several puppies. Each puppy can be called Puppy 1, Puppy 2, Puppy 3, etc., until you give them names. Here is an example of a spreadsheet:

Name	Date of Birth	Time of Birth	Weight at Birth (in ounces)	Primary/Secondary Color	Markings	Picture
Puppy 1						
Puppy 2						
Puppy 3						

After delivery, what should I do?

Once you are sure that the momma has finished delivering her pups, the first thing to do is to clean up the whelping box or pool and put down clean, dry blankets or towels. This is where the heating pad may be useful. You can make a bed for the puppies in a plastic bin and set it on top of the heating pad while you are cleaning the whelping area. Using newspaper and or puppy pee pads to layer over blankets and towels may help to keep them clean longer. Regardless, there will be daily washing of dirty laundry.

Momma will probably want to eat and drink once her delivery is over. Be sure to have plenty of food and water available. Momma should be eating puppy food and will eat much more food than usual while she is nursing. Most bags of puppy food will indicate how much to feed a nursing mom daily. In addition to dry food you can mix a can of wet puppy food for a yummy mix for momma to eat. Provide her with as much food as she will eat. You can also leave a bowl of dry food out for her to eat at will. Lots of water will be needed too. Replenish the water as needed.

Continuing Care of Mom and Puppies:

Please see the following documents:

[Raising Puppies With a Mom](#)

[Raising Puppies Without a Mom](#)

[Fading Puppy Protocol](#)