

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE BREEDING YOUR DOG

by Bonnie Wilcox, DVM

It is extremely important to learn the facts and possible consequences in advance if you are contemplating breeding your dog. In today's overcrowded world, we, the wardens of our domestic pets, must make responsible decisions for them and for ourselves. The following points should be reviewed carefully.

QUALITY

AKC registration is NOT an indication of quality. Most dogs, even purebred, should not be bred. Many dogs, though wonderful pets, have defects of structure, personality or health that should not be perpetuated. Breeding animals should be proven free of these defects BEFORE starting on a reproductive career. Breeding should only be done with the goal of IMPROVEMENT—an honest attempt to create puppies better than their parents. Ignorance is no excuse—once you have created a life, you can't take it back, even if blind, crippled or a canine psychopath!!

COST

Dog breeding is NOT a money making proposition, if done correctly. Health care and shots, diagnosis of problems and proof of quality, extra food, facilities, stud fees, advertising, etc. are all costly and must be paid BEFORE the pups can be sold. An unexpected Caesarean or emergency intensive care for a sick pup will make a break-even litter become a big liability. And this is IF you can sell the pups.

SALES

First time breeders have no reputation and no referrals to help them find buyers. Previous promises of "I want a dog just like yours" evaporate. Consider the time and expense of caring for pups that may not sell 'til four months, eight months or more!

What WOULD you do if your pups did not sell? Send them to the pound? Dump them in the country? Sell them cheap to a dog broker who may resell them to labs or other unsavory buyers? Veteran breeders WITH a good reputation often don't consider a breeding unless they have cash deposits in advance for an average-sized litter.

JOY OF BIRTH

If you're doing it for the children's education, remember the whelping may be at three a.m. or at the vet's on the surgery table. Even if the kiddies are present, they may get a chance to see the birth of a monster or a mummy, or watch the bitch scream and bite you as you attempt to deliver a pup that is half out and too large. Bitches can have severe delivery problems or even die in whelp—pups can be born dead or with gross deformities that can require euthanasia. Of course there can be joy, but if you can't deal with the possibility of tragedy, don't start.

TIME

Veteran breeders of quality dogs state they spend well over 130 hours of labor in raising an average litter. That is over two hours per day, every day! The bitch CANNOT be left alone while whelping and only for short periods for the first few days after. Be prepared for days off work and sleepless nights. Even after delivery, mom needs care and feeding, puppies need daily checking, weighing, socialization, and later grooming and training, and the whelping box needs lots and lots of cleaning. More hours are spent doing paperwork, pedigrees and interviewing buyers. If you have any abnormal conditions, such as sick puppies or a bitch who can't or won't care for her babes, count on double the time. If you can't provide the time, you will either have dead pups

or poor ones that are bad tempered, anti-social, dirty and/or sickly—hardly a buyer's delight.

HUMANE RESPONSIBILITIES

It's midnight—do you know where your puppies are? There are THREE AND A HALF MILLION unwanted dogs put to death in pounds in this country each year, with millions more dying homeless and unwanted through starvation, disease, automobiles, abuse, etc. Nearly a quarter of the victims of this unspeakable tragedy are purebred dogs "with papers." The breeder who creates a life is responsible for that life. Will you carefully screen potential buyers? Or will you just take the money and not worry if the puppy is chained in a junk yard all of its life or runs in the street to be killed? Will you turn down a sale to irresponsible owners? Or will you say "yes" and not think about the puppy you held and loved now having a litter of mongrels every time she comes in heat which fills the pounds with more statistics—your grand-pups? Would you be prepared to take back a grown puppy if the owners can no longer care for it? Or can you live with the thought that the baby you helped bring into the world will be destroyed at the pound?

For the sake of your pet, please think again.

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