

Northern Oaks

Bird & Animal Hospital

Breeding Your Dog

It is extremely important to learn the facts in advance if you are contemplating breeding your dog.

Consider These Points:

Quality:

AKC registration is NOT an indication of quality. AKC is a hobby organization simply meant to track parentage, not to indicate that a pet is healthy. Most dogs, even purebred, should not breed. Many dogs, though wonderful pets, have defects of structure, health, or personality 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 of the breed. No pet should be bred that has allergies, or other possible inherited traits.

Expense:

Dog breeding is not a large moneymaking proposition when done correctly. Health care, vaccinations, proof of quality, food, facilities, stud fees, advertising, etc. are all costly and must be paid before the puppies can be sold. An unexpected Cesarean Section or emergency intensive care for a sick puppy will make a break-even litter become a major financial loss.

Sales:

First-time breeders have no reputation and no referrals to help them find buyers. Consider the time and expense involved in caring for puppies that may not sell until four months, eight months, or more. Veteran breeders with a good reputation often don't consider breeding unless they have cash deposits in advance for an average-sized litter.

Time:

Veteran breeders of quality dogs state that they spend well over 130 hours of labor in raising an average litter. This is over two hours per day, every day. The mother 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, mother dogs need care and feeding; puppies need daily checking, weighing, and socialization. Later, puppies need grooming, vaccinations, training, and the puppies & whelping box require

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frequent cleaning. More hours are spent doing paperwork, pedigrees, and interviewing buyers. If you have any abnormal conditions, such as sick puppies or a bitch that can't or won't care for her puppies, the time is doubled.

Humane Responsibilities:

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 and abuse. More than 30,000 dogs and cats were put to sleep at the San Antonio Animal Care Services facility last year, simply because no one wanted them. **ONE FOURTH of the victims of this tragedy are purebred dogs "with papers."** The breeder who creates a life is responsible for that life. How carefully can you screen potential buyers? Will you turn down a sale to irresponsible buyers? Would you be prepared to take a grown puppy if the owners can no longer care for it?

Health of the Mother and Father:

This point is actually the largest veterinary concern. Each of a female's first four heat cycles increases her risk of breast cancer by 25% apiece. Dogs that have never had a heat cycle rarely develop breast cancers. Since the first heat can sometimes be "silent", it is best if the spay surgery is performed at four to six months of age. This way they never have a spike of estrogen which can stimulate the breast tissue, leading to higher rates of cancer later. Another disease, called pyometra, can occur in unspayed females that have repeated heat cycles. When this happens fluid in the uterus can become infected with bacteria and result in the uterus filling with pus. The best way to treat this problem is with an emergency spay, but with a very ill dog, the surgery is much more difficult and risky, and post operative hospitalization and antibiotics are needed, all at much higher cost. If a dog is intended to be a family pet and not breeding as a job, the dog is much healthier if she is spayed early.

Male dogs that are not neutered are susceptible to testicular tumors. This is the second most common cancer in male dogs, after skin cancer. They are also susceptible to an infection called prostatitis in which the prostate gland becomes large and painful, potentially obstructing urination. The only way to treat prostatitis is with long-term antibiotics and neutering. Male intact dogs are more likely to mark (urinate) in the house, dig or chew their way out to find a female, get in fights with both male and female dogs, and mount or "hump" objects and people. Neutering a male dog will not change their personality or stunt their growth.