

# Breeding Your Dog

- There are currently more dogs in the United States than there are homes for them. As a result, millions of dogs are surrendered to shelters and euthanized each year.
- Breeding should only be done to improve the breed, which requires a strong knowledge of the pedigrees and health histories of both the female and male dogs.
- Responsible breeding requires a tremendous amount of time and money, as well as a commitment to socialization, training, and ensuring that the puppies have good homes for a lifetime.
- Dogs that are not spayed or neutered are more likely to experience potential health problems.

### Should I Breed My Dog?

Most shelters and rescue organizations are overflowing with mixed breed and purebred dogs that are perfectly friendly and adoptable, but there simply aren't enough homes for them. As a result, approximately three to four million unwanted dogs and cats are euthanized each year, according to the Humane Society of the United States. Producing more puppies, for any other reason than to improve the breed, just exacerbates the problem.

Dogs that have temperament problems, such as aggression or excessively submissive behavior, should not be bred. Dogs that have inherited medical conditions, such as hip dysplasia, also should not be bred.

### What's Involved in Raising a Litter?

Before you breed your dog, honestly consider if you have the time, commitment, and finances required to raise a litter. Ask yourself the following questions:

- **Can I afford to raise a litter?** Before breeding, both the female and male dogs should be tested for brucellosis, a kind of venereal disease. They should also be screened for genetic problems they could pass to their offspring, including joint problems such as hip dysplasia, as well as eye and heart conditions. The female dog should be vaccinated and dewormed before she is bred. Once she is pregnant, she will require prenatal exams, and possibly radiographs (x-rays) or an abdominal ultrasound. If there is a problem during birth, she may need an emergency Caesarean section. After birth, the puppies will require veterinary exams, vaccinations, dewormers, and heartworm medication before they are sent to new homes.
- **Can I deal with the birthing process?** Can you be there to assist with the birthing process? Do you know what to do if there's a problem? If there are complications, the mother dog and/or some of the puppies may not survive. Remember, if you want your children to learn from the birthing process, it can be a difficult experience for them if things don't go smoothly.
- **Do I have the time to care for the puppies?** Some mothers reject their litters, or develop mastitis (a breast infection that can happen after giving birth), so they are unable to nurse the puppies. If that happens, will you have time to feed each puppy several times a day and provide other care at this critical stage? You will also spend a considerable amount of time cleaning up after the puppies that aren't housebroken, and working to make sure they are housebroken before they go to their new homes.

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## Choices and Considerations

### What Are My Responsibilities as a Breeder?

Good breeders take responsibility for their puppies not just until they find a new home, but for a lifetime. Reputable breeders:

- ***Mate purebred dogs only to improve the breed.*** They follow breeding standards and belong to breed organizations. They make sure that both the mother and the father dogs are screened for genetic defects, and have the papers to prove their health and genetic backgrounds.
- ***Provide each puppy with individual attention to assure that it is properly socialized.*** They want a puppy that's not only physically healthy, but enjoys interacting with people and other dogs.
- ***Interview potential owners to find the best homes for their puppies.*** These breeders make sure the owners are financially prepared and committed to keeping the puppies for a lifetime, which can be 10 years or more.
- ***Require new owners to sign a contract.*** The contract may require that the owners spay or neuter the puppy, and that they return the dog to the breeder, should they be unable to keep it.

Both of these measures are designed to prevent dogs from being surrendered to shelters.

- ***Provide a health guarantee.*** The breeder provides paperwork showing that a veterinarian has examined the puppy and found no inherited problems or diseases, and that early vaccination and deworming have been performed.
- ***Are available to offer advice and guidance over the months and years ahead.*** Good breeders are knowledgeable about the breed, and make themselves available to educate and advise the new owners.

### Are There Any Health Risks Involved With Breeding?

There are always potential risks associated with pregnancy and birth, especially with very young or very old dogs.

Whether you breed your dog or not, spaying or neutering can help eliminate some potential health problems. Female dogs that are spayed are less likely to develop breast cancer and pyometra, an infection of the uterus that requires emergency surgery. Male dogs that are neutered are less likely to develop testicular cancer. Certain types of aggression are also less likely to occur in dogs that are spayed or neutered.