

Dear Dr. Wise,

Question: Our eighteen-month-old poodle Cricket is expecting in about four weeks. How can we make sure she has a smooth delivery?

Answer: The more you know on the subject, the better help you can be to Cricket. Gestation period for dogs is 59-64 days, so it appears that Cricket is half way through her pregnancy.

As muscle tone is important for a smooth delivery, you can start now to get Cricket in condition by taking her on short walks.

You also will want to prepare her whelping box now. Chose a quiet place with a steady temperature. The box should be roomy enough for Cricket to move around in. Add a supply of towels or cloth so she can make a nest. If you confine her in the area for sleeping two or four days before whelping, she is most likely to get the idea that this is her "delivery room".

Most dogs handle whelping with ease. Poodles are not predisposed to problems but dogs like pugs with big heads, Boston terriers and a few other breeds more frequently require cesarean deliveries.

About three to seven days before birth, Cricket will attempt to make a nest by taking clothes, even toys, into the whelping area. As she nears the 59<sup>th</sup> day, you can begin to take her temperature with a rectal thermometer. Approximately two to 24 hours before whelping, her body temperature will drop to 98-99 degrees.

Cricket will be restless in the early stages of labor. She will pant frequently, refuse food and even vomit. She may lie down and push, then get up and walk around. True labor begins when she lies down on her side and begins pushing. You can count on 30-60 minutes between puppies.

If Cricket goes two hours between pups or if she labors five hours without any pup, call your veterinarian immediately. Suspect serious trouble if there is a dark green discharge without the start of active labor or if delivery hasn't taken place by the 64<sup>th</sup> day.

Watch to see that a placenta is expelled after each pup. Make certain that Cricket cleans the membrane away from each pup's nose and mouth and licks it to stimulate breathing. Don't be in a hurry to intervene, but if Cricket doesn't do the job on her own, you should clean the mouth and nose and gently rub the pup's sides with a cloth. She may push the pups away after cleaning and give them no attention until all the litter is born. If she does not help the pups nurse, you may have to assist by placing their mouth over the nipple. Mother and puppies should see the veterinarian the day after birth to make sure everything is alright.

If you have a question about your pet, write to Dr. Wise, Indiana Veterinary Medical Association, 201 S. Capitol Ave., Ste. 405, Indianapolis, IN 46225.