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SO YOU WANT A LITTER OF PUPPIES?

WHY??? "To make a lot of money!" Do you realize the expense involved in such items as advertising, stud fee, vet bills, food, etc. to name a few?

"Because it would be good for the children to watch the birth and play with the puppies as they grow up." Actually the gory parts of the whelping repulse most children, who are all too anxious to just skip viewing the miracle of birth you planned for them to see. And a litter growing up is too rowdy for most small children, who are usually totally disinterested or absolutely terrified of the leaping creatures with the sharp nails and teeth. If you want them to watch a litter being born, it's better and easier to find a breeder who will let them get up in the middle of the night to come over and watch the litter being whelped.

"Because we love Fido and want one just like her." The chances that you will get one "just like her" are slim indeed.

"Because everyone who comes to the house sees Fido and wants a puppy when she has a litter." But just wait until your litter of 12 is ready to go to their new homes – watch all those people back out with myriad excuses like: "The kids aren't old enough yet." "The kids are too old now to be bothered taking care of a dog." "We are going to have a baby." "The house is too small." "We'll be moving in three months – wait until then." (But your puppy is ready now). "The rug is too new." "Grandma doesn't like dogs." "Our old dog didn't die yet." "It might not get along with the cat." - and the list goes on and on.

"Because we really love little puppies." You'd better be sure you really love them, because until you have them, you can't fully imagine how much is involved, such as: The mess a litter can make – Can you put up with the cleaning that is constantly involved in caring for a litter? There is no way to explain how tired you get of scrubbing up after the puppies, their whelping box, the yard, kennel, or wherever they're kept. They dump their food and water the minute you put it down, step in it, roll in it and drop it through whatever else may be in the puppy box: and with six or eight or ten puppies, there's always something else to be cleaned up too. The responsibility you will have with a litter – It's not as easy as Fido having the litter and taking care of them till they're ready to go. Most of it is up to you and you're tied to the litter like any new mother, only you can't take the litter with you to your in-laws for the weekend or anywhere else for the weekend for that matter, so you'd better be content to spend all your time at home. There can't be any day-long shopping sprees or anything that takes you away from home for too long, because you'll have to be there to feed the puppies four times every day.

Now that you have some idea of what's involved other than playing with cute, cuddly little puppies and you're still determined to go ahead anyway, here's something else that should be considered:

- ❖ Is your female dog of quality to the breed? Do you know her faults as well as her virtues? Does she meet with the standard of her breed? Is she desirable temperament? Is she of sound health?
- ❖ Do you have customers so you won't have to sell the puppies at a price below their value or take them to a shelter?

If you can answer "Yes" to the above and you haven't lost the determination to try your hand at raising a litter, then read on.

- Get an opinion of your female dog from a few breeders. Find out what they think of her faults and virtues.
- Learn about any problems that are within your breed (such as hip dysplasia, PRA, etc.) Study the breed standard yourself so that you are familiar with it when looking at and evaluating possible stud dogs.

- Get several breeders' opinions of a good choice for a stud dog that will enhance your female dog.
- Go to see as many of the stud dogs and their offspring as you can. If you are a novice, you may feel safer breeding your female dog to a champion because in most cases he is a proven good representative of his breed.
- Be sure the stud dog is clear of breed problems (such as HD, PRA).
- After you've decided on a stud dog, take your female dog to the vet (\$\$).
- Have her x-rayed, if this has not yet been done. Have her checked for hereditary eye defects. If there are any other special problems within your breed, have her examined to be sure she is free of them.
- She should have a general health check-up and the vet will let you know if any vitamin supplements are necessary. This examination should include checking for the following: (1) worms (take along a stool sample); (2) Heartworm; (3) Brucellosis; (4) Shots up to date? Don't forget, all of this is going to cost money, but it's a necessary part of planning for a healthy litter!
- Now, while you wait for her to come in season, read all you can – on your particular breed, breeding, whelping and rearing young puppies. Start saving all your newspapers and have you friends and relatives do the same (remember what we told about all that clean-up? You'll need all the newspapers you can get your hands on!) Have a whelping box built, or if you are handy, build one yourself (another expense \$\$).
- When your female dog comes in season: contact the stud owner with whom you have previously made arrangements regarding the breeding, and you will be advised when to bring your female dog. Plan to pay the stud fee at the time of breeding (\$\$). There may also be a boarding charge if your female dog is to stay with the stud dog's owner (\$\$). Be sure you understand in advance just what the payment of the stud fee is guaranteeing. The suitable stud for your female dog may be some distance away, involving, in addition to the stud and boarding fees, additional costs for transportation expenses (\$). Getting your female dog bred isn't always as easy as you might imagine and may require repeated trips to the stud dog.

After your female dog is bred, you have 63 days to do more reading and thinking, and laced in with the good thoughts about the precious little darlings will have to be some horrible thoughts about what can go wrong and how much it can cost you, both financially and emotionally. We hate to keep dwelling on this, but things do go wrong occasionally and you should be prepared in case it happens to you: (1) What if your female dog has problems and requires a Caesarean section or other extensive vet services? (\$\$) (2) What if the puppies die? (3) What are you going to do with ten six-month old puppies that you can't sell, give away or have the heart to put to sleep? Do you have adequate facilities? (4) What if your female dog can't or won't nurse the puppies? (5) And, worst of all, what if Fido dies while whelping or afterwards? Will it have been worth it?

The days pass, and Fido whelps her puppies without any problems, but you still want to take her to the vet to be checked. She will probably get hormone and antibiotic injections to prevent any infections. (\$\$) Lucky for you Fido whelped ten healthy puppies. They are almost six-weeks old and just about ready to sell, but first they all have to make a trip to the vet. (\$\$) Their six-week check-up will probably include shots and a check for worms, with medication, if necessary. (10 puppies times "X" = \$\$) Advertisements to find homes for the pups = \$\$

We hope that if you do breed your female dog, you do it the right way and only for the right reasons and put lots of time, thought and love into your decision. There are too many unwanted puppies put to sleep each year due to irresponsible and ignorant breeding. Don't let any puppies of yours end up this way.

THINK BEFORE YOU BREED!