



HELPING PAWS

## Helping Paws Caretaker Home Guidelines

The following guidelines are a general outline for the care of bitches in our breeding program and the care and socialization of their litters. Constant communication with Helping Paws staff is required as individual situations may differ.

### **Definition of caretaker home:**

Volunteer who provides a home and cares for the bitch while it is in the Helping Paws breeding program. The dog remains the property of Helping Paws until she is retired from the breeding program. Upon retirement, the caretaker home is offered ownership of the dog. If the caretaker home does not want ownership, it will be Helping Paws responsibility to place the dog in a home that Helping Paws determines will provide appropriate care and protection of the dog. At the time of retirement the dog must be spayed. Helping Paws will pay for the cost of spaying at a Helping Paws approved veterinary clinic.

### **Coverage of expenses:**

Volunteer may pay for basic veterinary care and dog food for the bitch as a donation. Caretaker home will submit timely reports of all veterinary care to Helping Paws. Helping Paws will cover the cost of heartworm testing and heartworm preventative. Helping Paws will pay for all costs involved in breeding the dog, this includes the cost of OFA certification of hips and elbows, eye examinations, pre-breeding exams, brucellosis testing, stud fees, progesterone testing, pre-whelping, whelping, and post-whelping veterinary care, dog food for puppies, puppy exams and vaccinations.

Prior to breeding - One-month prior to coming into season, the bitch must be up to date on all vaccinations and should have a fecal culture done.

### **Notification that the potential brood bitch is in season:**

The caretaker home must pay careful attention so that they are able to recognize the exact date the bitch is in season. The Director of Programs is notified when the bitch is in season and the caretaker home keeps record of "in season" dates. During the bitch's season, the foster home is required to prevent the occurrence of any accidental breeding.

### **Number of litters:**

Generally, most bitches in our breeding program will have 3 - 4 litters prior to withdrawal from the breeding program.

### **Selection of stud dog:**

It is the responsibility of the Director of Programs of Helping Paws to select the stud dog and make the necessary arrangements for breeding. It is the responsibility of the caretaker home to notify Helping Paws immediately when the dog comes into season. It is also the responsibility of the caretaker home to make sure the bitch has no opportunities for an accidental breeding while the dog is in their care.

### **Care of the bitch, pre-whelping:**

The bitch is to be fed a high quality food and exercised on a moderately active basis. She should not be exposed to situations where she may come into contact with other dogs that may carry viruses. Frequent communication with the Director of Programs is required for any questions or concerns about the pregnancy.

Helping Paws staff will have the bitch x-rayed 5 to 7 days before whelping to determine the number of puppies in the litter.

### **Whelping of the litter:**

The Director of Programs determines where the litter is whelped, be it the caretaker's home or elsewhere. If the litter is whelped elsewhere, the dog will go to that home approximately one week prior to delivery and would remain there for 8 weeks.

The following are guidelines for whelping of a litter.

Beginning one week prior to whelping, the bitch's temperature must be taken at least two times a day and the last few days the temperature is taken about every four hours. Caretaker home is to record the temperature and report to HP staff. We are looking for a temperature drop down to 98 degrees. Puppies are usually born within 24 hours of the temperature drop. As delivery of puppies does not always go according to plans, the bitch cannot be left alone during the last few days prior to delivery.

Items needed for delivery: Whelping box, heating pad, iodine, nasal aspirators, washcloths and towels, bedding, scale, dental floss, hemostats, dull scissors, heat lamp, thermometer, oxytocin, styptic powder, paper, pen & notebook, and newspapers.

Helping Paws can provide most of these items.

The Director of Programs must be contacted when the bitch goes into pre labor, so that she can be there to assist in the delivery of the litter.

### **Delivery of the puppies:**

Important essentials are:

- Assist the bitch as needed during delivery of puppies
- Record times that puppies are born
- Work on puppies that may have difficulties
- Determine if the use of oxytocin is necessary
- Make sure that placentas are accounted for
- Consult with a veterinarian if the bitch is having difficulty.

### **Care of the bitch and the litter:**

After the puppies are born, constant supervision is necessary for at least the first three days. This includes taking the bitch's temperature at least 2 times daily, watching for signs of infection in the bitch's discharge, and making sure that the puppies are nursing. The bitch will need to be watched for signs of mastitis or eclampsia. Puppies must be kept warm (room temperature of 70 - 80 degrees). All puppies need to be identified with a marking and need to be weighed daily for the first three weeks. From four—seven weeks, they should be weighed weekly. Care must be taken to assure that all puppies are healthy and thriving.

At three days old, a veterinarian removes the puppy's dewclaws. Biosensor exercises should be done on individual puppies from 3—16 days.

**More detailed information on caring for and socializing the puppies will be communicated directly by the Director of Programs as the puppies are raised.**