

Modern Natural Rearing: The Brood Bitch

**Image: "Devin" Ch. Blm A*starz Cause For
Applause, CGC and her 12/1/2004 litter.**

Devin is owned, raised & shown by the author

**This page is maintained by Donna Stekli, last
updated 02/08/2006**



This section will cover briefly what a Brood Bitch should be, what shape she should be in, her diet and her well-being.

The Brood Bitch is of utmost importance and demands the best of everything as she is the heart of a successful kennel. I am assuming that a bitch chosen to be a Brood Bitch is a very good example of her breed and that she comes from good stock. There is absolutely no point in breeding an average bitch from a mixed up pedigree of questionable background, not in today's world. I will agree that many of the keeshonds *from the past* came from such bitches, but we have come a long way from that in breeding programs and there is really no reason to have a mediocre bitch from a poor quality pedigree produce puppies. She should be spayed and kept as the pet she is supposed to be.

The Brood Bitch should be OFA'd well before any breeding plans are launched. It is important to know that an OFA x-ray should be taken between heat cycles and not close to the beginning or end of them. For some reason, the calcium changes in an intact bitch may alter her hip xrays if they are taken close to her heat cycles. I have Brucellosis tests and stifle checks done on the breeding pair. Other tests may be done, such as thyroid, and any fad tests that are currently in the limelight. The test choices are up to whoever is involved with the breeding and what is important to them.

Be sure she is current on her vaccinations before she comes in heat. Never give a bitch in season, in whelp, false pregnancy or one going through a loss of litter a vaccination of any kind. This can cause immune responses that may threaten her life because it is during these times when a bitch's immune system is extremely sensitive and geared up. I give my vaccinations separately for all dogs: DHLPP, Parvo and Rabies. (Puppies don't get Lepto.) The three are spaced at least 3 weeks apart. I do not give Lyme or Corona. Be sure the bitch is worm and pest free.

After my first litter, I stopped having vaginal cultures done on the bitch before breeding. I have not had unusual discharges or the like with my girls. It is natural for some bacteria to be in the vagina. With the exception of one breeding, all my girls have been bred naturally and all have conceived from their breedings to carry puppies to term. I have had no miscarriages or reabsorption. It is my belief that if a bitch cannot be or will not be bred naturally, considering the mating pair has met at the proper times during ovulation, perhaps nature is taking it's course.

Be careful about flea & tick control on a bitch that is planned to be bred, is in whelp or is nursing puppies. Do not put any chemical products on her or in her! Don't let her come in contact with an area that has been sprayed with a chemical! I use natural products if I have a summer litter. That includes a spray composed of pennyroyal & eucalyptus oils which can be added to your favorite coat spray. In addition, a mix of dried herbs of southernwood, wormwood, cayenne pepper, rosemary: grind those into a fine powder, add an equal amount of diatomaceous earth (see below) and then add a few drops of pennyroyal & eucalyptus oils. Mix and put in a shaker, such as an old baby powder container, to apply to the dog to combat pests. This mixture smells wonderful!

If the pest problem is major, wash the bitch often in a regular shampoo. Any shampoo will kill fleas, so don't use a flea and tick shampoo, just use a mild regular dog shampoo. Let her sit in lather for about 5 minutes and rinse. In areas where she will frequent, such as carpeting or the yard, get some diatomaceous earth. It is the result of ground up one celled algae that has become fossilized. It is so fine, it clings to the wax on the outside of the insects and makes them dry out and they die. It can be sprinkled in all areas. It is not a chemical and is safe. Garlic, parsley and brewer's yeast can be added to the diet to help combat pests from the inside.

A Brood Bitch should get ample exercise always, even up to the time of whelping. I let my girls run as much as they want. We have 40 degree inclines and slopes which build good strong muscles. It is most important that a Brood Bitch have very good muscle tone so she can get through whelping without having problems and without getting tired. She is given time to run free in a 1/4 acre fenced area. She can lay in the sun, dig a hole, chew on grass and sticks and just relax being a dog. Don't shelter her from your other dogs until later in her pregnancy. She still needs to feel a part of her dog family. When she starts to get too big, be careful mixing her with other dogs who may play rough or slam into her accidentally. Senior dogs that aren't bouncy and so active are a good "mixer dog" for a bitch in the final stage of pregnancy.

Give her on raspberry tea leaf powder before breeding. Use one teaspoon a day starting when she comes in heat and continuing until the pups are weaned. It contains vitamins A, B, C, E, Calcium, Phosphorus and Iron. Raspberry powder tones the uterine and pelvic muscles and helps prevent miscarriages. It aids in easing labor to enable the bitch's muscles to be strong thus making deliveries of pups fast and easy. It also encourages the milk to flow.

Get her on an ethoxyquin-free dry food. Ethoxyquin has been linked to problems in dogs and is still the subject of much controversy. The FDA has reopened the file on this preservative. Some dog foods which have this ingredient have bags marked "Not For Breeding Animals". The long-term affects are not known. Genetic effects long term are not known. Why bother with this when there are many good quality foods out there preserved with Vitamins C and E. The ones with questionable ingredients aren't fit for a healthy Brood Bitch and her puppies. I feed Natural Life Condition & Eagle Puppy formulas mixed together in equal parts. Nature's Recipe and Innova have some good foods as well. Go for a protein level around 24-28%, 14-18% fat. I have observed that Lamb as the only protein source, does not provide enough usable protein to hold Keeshond coats, although I don't know why. I also use some raw foods for all my kees, including the Brood Bitch: raw beef (roasts cut up into cubes), raw hamburger (85% - 15% fat), raw ground turkey or chicken; the meat is mixed in with the dry food and I also add some veggies (carrots, peas, green beans). Not every meal is the same. I do feed raw chicken wings about 2x per week.

Be sure the water the Brood Bitch drinks is as pure as possible. We are fortunate to have a spring-fed well and we are at a higher elevation than most anything in our area. Our water is WONDERFUL and we have no runoff from farmers fields to be concerned with. If the water supply is not good, it will affect the Brood Bitch as Keeshonds drink lots of water and it composes much of what they intake. It may be that bottled water should be purchased. You can add in some pedialyte (the same electrolyte solution used for human babies) to the bitch's drinking water at any time. This certainly will not harm her and may do her some good. It contains electrolytes and you can add in about 1/2 pedialyte to 1/2 water. You can continue this through the weaning process. (Actually, the water mixture may do all of your pets good!)

Cook for the Brood Bitch. I use a couple of the recipes from [Pitcairn book]. Specifically "Hearty Canine Combo", "Choice Chow" along with my cupcake recipe. I mix up a dog stew that is added to the dry dog food. These 3 main diets are alternated. [For some of the recipes click here!](#) As the bitch approaches her whelping time, her meals are divided because of her limited stomach capacity. I give her all she will eat at a meal, which is limited to 20 minutes. After that the food is taken away until the next meal. I don't believe in free feeding.

I don't take a bitch that has been bred to dog shows. From the time she is bred, she stays home. The exposure to diseases once she is in whelp isn't necessary if you are serious about a healthy bitch and her litter.

The last half of pregnancy is the time when the bone building goes on, so you may want to give a bit (not much!) of extra calcium from natural sources. I give cottage cheese and yogurt (plain, whole fat) in the amount of about 2 tablespoons 3x per week. I do not give any other calcium supplement at this time including PetCal or the like. Note that oversupplementation with calcium or any vitamins and minerals may cause calcium absorption problems and difficulty in whelping. The yogurt and cottage cheese can be increased once the puppies arrive and the mom is nursing. I continue the yogurt after that time to 2 tablespoons 1x per day. I do add more raw meat (as noted above) when the bitch is nursing.

I give 3,000 mgs of Vitamin C, along with 200 IU Vitamin E and 30 mg Zinc daily from whelping time until weaning. These are continued after that every other day throughout the year.

About a week before the due date, bathe your bitch using regular shampoo. Clip down her belly area and be sure her teats are washed well. Be sure you rinse her well, so no soap residue is left. Clip around her vulva, and if she has plush furnishings on the britches, take some of that off as well; it will only get stained and in the way during whelping. When the pups are around 8weeks of age, it will all be blown/shed anyway. Introduce her to the area where she will be whelping. We have a spare bedroom that is used. We encourage her to sleep and eat in the room.



During whelping, our girls usually pick chairs or loveseats to go through pre-labor on. We have a couple of old chairs in a spare room we keep around just for this purpose. The bitch can push and use the leverage of the arm of the chair. They seem to be much more comfortable and content. Although it may be a bit messy, you can take the chair outside afterwards and clean it. Let the bitch eat as many placentas as she wants. They contain many nutrients. Let newborns nurse on the bitch between deliveries. This helps the uterus contract. Remove the nursing puppies to a warm box when the next puppy starts coming. Between puppies, a tablespoon of honey with

formula [see recipe for Puppy Formula] is offered to the bitch and usually taken. You can also give NutriCal for energy. This keeps her from tiring.

After the whelping, we transfer the family to the whelping box. We keep the room semi-dark to simulate a den. Keep the noise level down around the "nest" for the first 2 weeks. I play a radio on low volume on a calming station in the puppy room. Most bitches do not want the company of other pets in the puppy room for at least the first week. Don't stress her out. Keep her room private to her and her puppies. There will be plenty of time for the other members of the animal family to meet the new kids once they hit about 3-4 weeks of age. The mother can go outside of the room and if she likes, mingle with the other pets, but her puppy room should remain private.



The best thing you can do for your bitch is not to be nervous yourself! She needs a relaxed, calm environment. If you are nervous or too overbearing, your bitch will not be comfortable! Another common thing owners do is try to talk to their bitch so soothe her during labor. This is not necessary and may interfere with her natural duties. Just be there for her and don't baby talk to her. She has a job to do.

During whelping, you should count placentas as they come out (should be one per puppy). I usually have a oxytocin shot given by the vet after whelping. This helps clean out the uterus of all the gunk that may be left in there (including retained placentas) and helps bring the milk in. Offer the bitch her regular diet of food after she has settled down. I feed a nursing bitch three times a day. Be sure she is getting natural sources of calcium (as stated above). She should have a constant supply of fresh water at all times. This is very important as she is a milk making machine and has to have the ingredients to do so. Take her temperature every day for the first few days to be sure it is normal. A bitch that has just whelped will have a slightly elevated temperature, but it should not be outside the normal range. Be sure she is having bowel movements, even though they may be messy for a few days following whelping. One of the signs of eclampsia (lack of adequate calcium) is the binding of the muscles, which can include the bowel muscles. A sign of eclampsia is for the bitch to not have a bowel movement. Another sign is pale gums.

Do not keep her room too hot! Although the [generic] whelping books say, keep the room at 85 degrees F, that is too hot for a (coated) keeshond bitch & her pups. As long as the puppies are nursing, sleeping and mom is with them, the kees bitch should not be kept too hot! If the mom is overheated, the pups will cry, she will pant incessantly and be very uncomfortable. This is not good. I have not used incandescent lights or any kind of direct heat source either overhead or on the whelping box floor. I have kept a space heater in the room with a temperature control, but have not used a heating pad in the whelping box. For one thing, overhead heating can be dangerous if it is not absolutely stable. The same applies for heating pads. They can be dangerous as well. An overheated puppy is as bad as a cold puppy. You can cause brain damage either way. If the puppies are eating, sleeping and "piling" (making a puppy pile with each other) without a lot of noise, then all is well.



Take your new mom-dog out for potty breaks throughout the day. This is important for her to eliminate, stretch and get some fresh air. For the short time she will be out of the whelping box (15min or so), the puppies will be fine in a pile and there is no need to move them to a heated box. This holds true only for a normal litter. We will not cover how to deal with problem litters in this article. Once you convince the mom to leave her pups for a potty break, take her outside and walk her around. I stay with my new moms just in case they might see a critter to chase. Nothing can happen to her (accident, hit by a car or anything) as she is the life support system for those puppies. This gives you an opportunity to check her stools and make sure she is eliminating normally.

Once back in the house, new moms usually beeline for the puppy room. I take them in the kitchen, do a back rub, flip them on their backs and do a mammary gland check. Make sure the glands look nice and pink, no purple, inflamed or infected glands. The latter could be a sign of mastitis (infected mammary glands). If you should see any problems, call your vet. I also take a cool hand towel (damp and cool) and lay it on their belly. New moms love this! It feels great to them. It helps remove anything they may have picked up on their potty break outside and it soothes their mammary glands. Their belly will be hot! This feels great to them. There is no need to use any soap and you don't want to because it can affect the puppies nursing. Just a clean hand towel, cool water, rinse, wring out and lay across the belly.

A healthy, happy puppy will be quiet, will nurse at regular intervals, will "pile" with its littermates and will gain weight steadily. I use a digital scale and weigh pups 2x per day for the first 4-5 days and then once a day thereafter. One of the first signs of a puppy in trouble is one who cries more often, can't get comfortable (moves around the whelping box) and who doesn't gain weight. Checking for dehydration is something that should be done every day with every puppy for the first week. To do this, take the skin at the back of the puppy's neck and "pinch" it sideways (not to hurt but to "tent") and if the skin doesn't "fall back down" and remains in a tented mode, the puppy is dehydrated. In this case you can do one of two things. You can give the puppy a glucose injection subcutaneous at the back of the neck (check with your vet on how to properly do this & how much glucose to use) or you can supplement feeding with puppy formula mixed 1/2 and 1/2 with pedialyte (the same electrolyte solution used for human babies) and bottle feed.



For the nursing mother, I continue with the raw meat diets, alternating sources. Raw liver is excellent to stimulate milk production, but I don't give in large quantities because it is very rich and cause loose stools. I also use raw beef chunks. The mother will need to eat about 3-4x her normal meals during weeks 2-4 as this is the highest demand time on her body. Once the puppies start to be weaned, the amount to feed mom should decrease gradually. The quality of the food should not as she needs the nutrition to build her back up.

Other points to consider: Keep your bitch in good shape, even when she's not having a litter. The goal should be for an overall healthy dog (mind & body) and not just to have special treatment because she's going to produce puppies. A year round good diet, including herbs & vitamins, ample exercise, good attitude will make her the best she can be even into her veteran days.

Listed below, in alphabetical order, are foods that are good and a few notes about them. When switching to a more natural diet, be sure to use balanced portions and not load up on one thing. We add balanced, good food portions to a quality balanced dry food. When using meats, stick to

one or two kinds as too much variety in protein sources in one meal makes them more complex to digest. The rule of thumb should be MODERATION and BALANCE.

Reference to herbs for the Brood Bitch

Item	Description
Alfalfa sprouts	Helps in weight gain, stimulates appetite, good for muscle/joint pains, contains calcium, phosphorus, iron, potassium, magnesium, enzymes, choline, sodium, silicon, Vits A B, D, K & P
Apples	Juice or fruit: contains pectin which is a natural toxin remover, (fruit) adds fiber to diet, great for diabetic dogs because it slows down the absorption of sugars
Bananas	Rich in potassium & magnesium, both needed for bone building & calcium balance. Use only fully ripe fruit.
Beef liver	(raw) folic acid, sulfur, iron, many vitamins & minerals
Brown rice	Iron, amino acids, linoleic acid, Vit B & E. It strengthens internal organs, calms the nervous system & relieves depression
Carrots	(grated raw) potassium, Vit C & Vit A, also fun food for puppies!
Cornmeal	Contains more lysine than any other grain (not degerminated)
Eggs	A complete food, can be fed scrambled or raw [soak in hot water for five minutes] but boiled is not recommended as they become hard to digest
Fenugreek	Can help stimulate milk to come in. This is an herb. Do not give during pregnancy as it can stimulate the uterus, but you can give it after pregnancy to bring in the milk.
Garlic	(fresh raw) Used as a pest fighter, worm inhibitor, garlic is a natural antibiotic and antifungal, digestive helper and good for the nervous system
Goat's milk	Obtained from a goat farm is best, but if you can't get raw goats milk, perhaps there is a natural food supermarket near you that may have the less desirable pasteurized goat's milk. Add in moderation
Kale	Rich in Vit C, more digestible for dogs than spinach & should be used instead of spinach
Molasses	Helps in milk production, high in iron
Oats	Helps produce milk, good source of iron, calcium, copper, magnesium, zinc, silica and Vitamin B. They act as a calmer for nerves, depression and insomnia. Helps to regulate thyroid & blood sugar
Oil of Evening Primrose	Great source of linolenic acid which is great for coat and skin
Parsley	Strengthens digestion, source of Vit C, iron, manganese, calcium, phosphorus. Increases milk production and helps uterine muscles
Raisins	Unsulfured. High in potassium, phosphorous, magnesium, iron and calcium. Also contain Vit A & B-complex.
Red clover	Flower tops; helps with skin disorders such as eczema
Yogurt	Very good for digestion and addition of natural bacteria cultures. Yogurt can be given to newborn puppies as a matter of routine or for any puppy that has loose stools. It can be added to formula if

	puppies are hand-raised. Get the high fat, plain kind. Goat yogurt is best.
Wild yam	Very high in Vit A. A natural source of progesterone.

My herbal Brood Bitch formula is a mixture of:

Red raspberry leaf, alfalfa, red clover, rosemary, chamomile, feverfew, rosehips, southernwood, nettles, comfrey root, slippery elm bark, calamus root, marshmallow root, borage, elder flowers, dill seed, fennel seed, sea vegetables, golden seal, echinacea, brewers yeast flakes.

Solid Gold makes an herbal formula called "*Concept-A-Bitch*" that contains: red raspberry leaves, dried seaweed meal, common fennel, lyseine, wild yam, peppermint, beta carotene and folic acid. It is more convenient to obtain and give than my formula, although not as complete.



[For recipes click here!](#)

-THE END-

To contact us, or send feedback, mail to: [Click Here!](#)

Visit the [A*starz Kees Home Page](#)

This page is maintained by Donna Stekli. Last updated 02/08/2006
Copyright © 1995-2006 A*starz Productions. All Rights Reserved.