

## Swiss Run Greater Swiss Mountain Dogs

### **Thinking about breeding your pet?**

Here is an informational packet to help you make an educated decision regarding breeding. One of the more important things to have established prior to breeding your dog is whether or not you have people interested in buying your puppies. The last thing anyone wants is unwanted puppies with no homes. Also, make sure that you have a breed that people are interested in and that the prospective owners have done their research on this breed. It is important to appropriately match the owner with the breed.

The next thing to keep in mind is the cost of breeding. It may sound simple: Your bitch comes into season, you find a stud dog and allow them to breed. Unfortunately, it is not simple at all if done properly. First, your bitch should be clear of all health issues for your breed. Screening tests such as radiographs of the hips and elbows should be done to ensure that they are free of developmental orthopedic problems. The cost for anesthesia, radiographs and OFA certification is around \$250. To allow the bitch or stud to be fully developed and to be able to fully evaluate both their health and their overall temperament, you should wait until 2 years of age to begin the breeding process. This is very important because it takes at least 2 years for your bitch to mature enough, both physically and emotionally, to support and care for a litter of puppies. Depending on the breed and the common problems seen in that breed, the other certifications which should be considered are the heart and the eyes. And of course, your bitch should be a good representation of the breed in both conformation and temperament.

Second, you need to find a nice stud that has a good gene pool and good personality. To breed to the stud, it can run anywhere from \$500-\$3,000 depending on how many breedings you want. Sometimes, instead of paying a fee they may want a puppy in return. Depending on the dog owner, they may be particular about breeding to a show quality bitch not a pet. On top of the stud fee you may need to do progesterone tests to see when she is ready for breeding if the male is not in the area. Depending on how many you need this test starts around \$80.00 so it can get expensive. Then depending on the stud and stud location you may need to do an artificial insemination. The insemination could run between \$200-\$400 each breeding. Some dog owners prefer this method to decrease risks of transmitting diseases like brucellosis and to keep the dogs safe from fights. If a live breeding is to take place your bitch would have to stay at the stud's house for at least a week or until the breedings are finished.

Once your dog is pregnant, which may take more than one heat cycle; you should consider proper care of the pregnant bitch. You need to make sure she is fed puppy food at least the last two weeks of the pregnancy to ensure that she will have enough energy and calcium to support the rapidly growing puppies and upcoming milk production. You should begin deworming the bitch 2-4 weeks prior to her whelping date and then every two weeks until the puppies are 12 weeks of age. The puppies should also be de-wormed every two weeks starting at 2 weeks of age. Knowing your exact breeding date becomes very important when you are trying to plan for the whelping. Depending on the breed, it is not uncommon for a bitch to require some help during the whelping or potentially even a cesarean section. Unfortunately, whelping rarely happens during business hours, so be prepared that you may have to have emergency aid. Know what to expect during whelping and when a veterinarian should be called. If she would need a c-section depending on the time of night it could be anywhere from \$800-\$3,000 – unfortunately, this does not even ensure that the puppies will survive.

The last thing is the care of the puppies when they are born. Optimally, the puppies should be left with the mother until they are 7-9 weeks of age, with weaning to solid food occurring around 4 weeks. Starting at 2 weeks of age, the puppies need to be de-wormed every two weeks until they are 12 weeks of age. The dam and her litter should be taken to a

veterinarian in their first week of life for an overall health check and their first Distemper vaccination should be given at 6 weeks of age. The heaviest burden on a breeder is making sure that the puppies go to appropriate homes. Taking the time to strictly screen prospective owners will weed out those who are not prepared for the responsibility of owning a puppy of your particular breed.

Overall, breeding sounds like it would be a fun and exciting experience, but in the long run it is not only expensive and very time consuming, but also carries a lot of responsibility. Done correctly and for the right reasons, little to no profit will be made on selling puppies nor should that be the reason for breeding them in the first place. Breeding should be done to improve the quality of the breed and to keep producing quality puppies.

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