

Today marks the final day that I will have Madison's puppies. The journey here was filled with hard work and dedication. I know many people have said that they would love to breed their dog. Many say it would be a great experience for their children to see a birth or that their dog is so special that she should provide this world with more of them. I myself never entered into this with any notion that this planet needed any more dogs I have always supported adoption- all of my other pets are adopted – saved from irresponsible people who didn't have time to spay or neuter or some other excuse. I see so many pets coming into my kennel that are not altered. I always ask the question. "Why are you keeping your dog intact?" Some tell me the stuff above, others just can't afford it or have issues with spouses that don't want to take away the manhood. Believe me I have heard it all. Now it may sound like I am giving you the reader the riot act or calling the kettle black but I did breed my dog and now I want to share my experiences with you all to help better understand what this takes or should take if you want to do the right thing should you venture to breed your dog.

The day that I got Madison she was 8 weeks old. She was the result of two of my customers wishing to breed their dogs. I had paired two wonderful boarders whom I felt would result in a healthy and happy group of dogs entering into this world. I assisted Madison's mother's owner the best I knew how. Providing a staff person and free food. I went by every couple of days to watch them grow. When they were around 6 weeks old, I couldn't hold them without bathing them. They stunk of pee and poop. I figured that was puppies- not a care in the world – rolling around and playing all day. Their dog mom looked exhausted and would run when they tried to nurse. Sounds like a human mom! I took Madison home and she cried for the whole night. The next night she was good- only taking her out around midnight to go potty.

She grew up and when she turned two years of age, I made the decision to find a suitable mate for her. I found one in Milo. Milo is one of my daycare dogs. He is a standard poodle with black and white markings. I was excited to see if I would end up with some with the same coloring as Milo. I made sure both were over 2 years old to make sure no issues arose such as hip or knee problems. Both were healthy dogs. I bred her in September. Afterwards, I told my husband that we might be having some puppies. He asked me how long a dog was pregnant for. I said 60 days. He looked at me and said "are you crazy? That's during our busiest time of the year in the kennel!" Too late now! So I started to give Madison more food. Watching to see if there were any signs of pregnancy. When we were sure she was pregnant, I started feeding her even more food. She was now eating 7-8 cups of food a day and growing bigger. I prepared a whelping box- telling my husband to make a pig rail that will fit the pen I chose. This rail is designed so that the mother dog does not roll on her pups and kill them so it has to be right! I researched on Google – looking at photo after photo of how this rail should be. Madison was now sleeping in her whelping box at night.

After a busy Thanksgiving holiday, the day when the entire kennel was to clear out, Madison went into labor. She started panting and digging in her whelping box. I watched her closely and notified the vet of her impending birth. I took her temperature and was told she was due to deliver within the next 12 hours. I stayed up with her all night. Checking her temperature and comforting her. The next morning, I told my husband to keep an eye on her- I was just going to check on everyone at the kennel and be back in a minute (which I may add never turns out to be any less than an hour!). He calls me frantic- it

looks like she delivered the first pup without me! I drop the phone and ran out of the office to my house. Sure enough the first puppy was born and was still in the sack- Madison did not know what to do! I immediately washed my hands and ran over to pull the sack off the new puppy. Luckily, the puppy started to breathe immediately and Madison took over licking her new addition and eating the placenta and cutting the umbilical cord. I prepared a separate area for the puppies with a heating pad and towels so that as the others were born, Madison could spend time cleaning and taking care of the newly born while the others were safe from her sitting on them. This process went on all day. We were both exhausted. After all 10 were born and happily nursing, Madison went into contractions again to deliver a final puppy. The puppy did not survive. I sat there trying all the techniques to save her. When all hope was lost, my husband asked me to give her to him. I refused. I battled with myself as to what I could have done differently. Finally, I handed my 11th puppy to him. I looked at the remaining 10 and told myself I must do whatever it takes to make sure they all thrive! I purchased a heating pad especially for dogs- new ones turn off and can be too hot. I put a thermostat inside to monitor the temperature. I turned the vent off in the room and turned the heater on- the area needed to be warm so nobody would get a chill. Madison went to the vet the next day to receive an x-ray and exam to be sure she did not have any pups trapped in there and to give her some medicine to clear her out.

The first night was tough. I watched over Madison and her pups constantly even though I had not slept in 24 hours. The next morning I still had to go to work to check on everyone. I crawled over to the kennel then went back to watching over the puppies. I ran back and forth all day. I went to bed that night only to awake to the sound of puppies crying. Madison was still stepping on the puppies and laying on them. I found one of the puppies outside of the whelping box lying on the cold floor one night! After a week of this I asked my husband to build a new whelping box. He said they were fine but I disagreed! They needed better protection so I could sleep without worry! So out of scrap wood and some parts at Lowes, the new whelping box was built. We placed in the area where the original one was and put the puppies in the new box. Madison accepted the new box well. She could now leave the box when she wished! Then at 7 pm that night the puppies started crying and she did not go into the box. I started to panic- why was she not taking care of them! What was wrong with her? Her milk was in and she looked on the verge of exploding! I paced with her! I pleaded with her as their screams seemed to get louder. Then after an hour of this she finally fed them. I was exhausted and went to bed. In the middle of the night it started again- I woke up and went in to find Madison sleeping next to the sofa- I thought she was bad mother- asking her in the darkness why she did not spend every moment with her kids- telling her I sacrificed sleep with my kids! This went on for weeks. The same pattern day after day. I thought I was going to lose my mind- maybe I already did?. I told myself it would be alright. I weighed the puppies every 2 days- marking which ones needed more food. I actually put a collar on the lightest one before going to lunch. When I came back the heaviest one had it on! We don't know how they did that! We pulled puppies for extra feedings- some were not nursing well – Madison only had 9 nipples so someone would not get fed if we didn't intervene.

After the puppies were 3 weeks old, I observed one get up from sleeping and go to the furthest spot and pee. I said to myself is there something to that? Do dogs know not to potty where they sleep? Back onto Google! Sure enough you can start potty training at the age of 3 ½ weeks! Just need to alter the

whelping box- so I went to my husband and asked him to cut a notch in the whelping box so the pups could get out and go potty – he thought Madison would not like the sudden freedom! I purchased a play pen for kids so we could contain them and a pee patch (a grass potty pad). The puppies seemed to enjoy the freedom. They started to go out to the pee patch to pee and poop. I was proud of them! Madison continued on her pattern of not wanting to feed them when they were screaming! At the age of 4 weeks, I started them on solid food with mom still feeding them. Things got better but still lots of lots of cleaning! I kept the area very clean- I did not want to have smelly puppies. I wanted to hold them and sit with them not have to bathe them every day.

When the puppies were 6 weeks old, Dr. Metzler came to visit to give the pups their first set of shots. All the puppies got a clean bill of health. When two days had passed, I created a small outdoor area for the pups to explore the grass. After spraying it down with disinfectant and allowing it dry I opened the door and watched the pups run and explore their new play area. They were so happy! I also noticed that they pooped and peed right away! Many started to dig and pull up grass – many would bring the toys out to the yard. I loved watching them! I continued to take them out to the yard to do potty with much success. At 2am they got to go out and potty. The puppies would wake up and cry a little – I would fly out of bed open the door and they would pile out and poop and come back in and lay next to my feet and fall back asleep. Oh the joys of puppyhood! I would then go out and try to find all the piles in the dark. I found that a flashlight works well but is awkward. Do they make a scooper with a flashlight? If not, I need to invent one! A couple of days ago, the pups slept through the night. I unfortunately woke up and did not know what to do with myself! I lay in bed listening for the slightest sound but nothing. I finally fell back asleep and woke at 5am to take everyone out. The puppy room was clean so I guess I was successful in training.

Now the last three remain... they will leave my home today. I am sad to see each one go but happy that I have now provided families with wonderful healthy puppies that will give years of love. As for me, I'm exhausted. I ask that anyone wishing to breed really consider the time and commitment that it takes to through this. I know what many of you reading this are saying. It does not seem that bad right? The final thing I'll say is if you want to do it right yes it is that difficult. It is also not a money making thing. The hours you spend plus all the supplies if done right will set you back around \$3000-\$4000! That's why puppy mills have puppies in cages with wire grates on the bottom and no socialization. They spend no time with them. They use hamster wheels to exercise them! Lots of profit at the expense of the dogs.

Thanks for reading this and hope that it has provided all with great insight into the world of breeding. For the sake of the animals, please spay/neuter your pets. It's the right thing to do.