

Thinking of breeding Great Danes? ..

Think again!

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The breeding of dogs, especially a unique breed such as Danes, is indeed a complex subject and many don't understand that there is a lot beyond the apparent simple mating of a stud and a dam.

I never thought it would take weeks of full time work, then continued serious effort. Never thought I had to be up all night every suspected night from day 58 to day 65 of the pregnancy, after all, I thought, well, dogs mate and give puppies in the wild on their own! I thought!

Never thought the house will be turned upside down and with a litter of puppies .. no matter how hard I try to keep clean .. it smells!

Never thought appreciated how much work it really is .. after all, I had Danes all my life, well, one Dane pet at the time.

Well .. let's establish a few Danes fact.

You probably know that the Dane is the dog of the elite, known as the aristocratic dog and is associated with the highly educated elite and sophisticated minority in society. Yet, it is often less understood than the pit-bull which is statistically associated with the typical baseball cap blue collar simple person. In fact, the idea that Danes are so different from other dogs and that they are so sensitive that you can hurt their feeling with angry words or by just ignoring them when they meet you at the door expecting affection, to many is unbelievable or perhaps even humorous.

But Danes are really different. And if you are going to breed them you need to appreciate this fact much more than what you know having raised a Dane. They will need more love, support and affection, without which, they will be depressed, they will get sick and they will have emotional and behavioural

problems. This fact will make breeding them very demanding in term of time and effort, not just the financial aspect.

The contemporary Dane is a breed developed over recent centuries in Germany - despite the ancient Egyptian origin - and as such, breeding Danes should be done to maintain the top quality conformation standard of Danes and even improve on it by producing ONLY top qualities puppies.

Obviously one must be extremely knowledgeable to have a chance of attaining this goal. This requires more than just thoroughly health testing of both parents and ensuring that the temperaments of both parents and their ancestors is typical of the "continental gentleman", the Dane, and to take full responsibility, both practical and financial, for every dog they cause to be born until the day it dies.

Besides this the breeder must have a thorough knowledge of pedigrees, conformation and the Standard for the breed. One does not obtain this knowledge overnight. This is why no novice should breed a dam unless they have an experienced mentor to guide them, and have put the effort into educating themselves. Unfortunately - many breeders don't know, and they don't know that they don't know. That's why they will never learn because they don't think they need learning. Who suffers, the Dane breed and those who buy pups that may look good at 6 weeks or you couldn't tell they are going to be of poor quality mature Danes.

There are two major mistakes some people make when it comes to breeding:

One, it is not a simple or easy job. Forget about the "they do it naturally" argument. In nature, "1" out of "5" or even according to other reports 1 out of 6 attempted pregnancy is successful. Not every mating ends with a successful inside tie. And, in nature almost one single pup out of a litter of average 6 pups makes it; or again according to the E.A.S.M. only 1 pup out of 7 pups litter survives, the rest die for many reasons - reasons the breeder's supervision and hard work eliminates.

Two; many people don't know that there is no money in breeding for profit unless you have (and I have seen it) a dozen bitches or so and a male in a kennel like a herd of sheep, with little or no care or expenses or maintenance, left outside in cages and let them breed - isolate each female

at time of giving birth in a separate cage and advertise one picture of a good looking female as if it's the only one (some of these pictures are even a scam as they are not their own Danes, they just post a picture of a good Dane!!!!) .. and as such the puppy mill operate in terrible conditions and to produce only junk excuse for a Dane with nothing but expected long term problems both health and personality. There are a lot of those on line. The breeding bitch needs all the care, attention and special treatment a pregnant woman gets. In 3rd world countries babies are born with severe problem, if born alive, and they later suffer severe problems because the woman doesn't get the medical supervision and care and the diet, preventative measures and all the advantages a woman gets in a civilized country. The same with dogs; in nature they have troubles you need to eliminate with personal care at home, and that can't be done at a puppy mill run for profit.

Yes, to breed - if you have one or even two females in a house, and will take care of them to produce healthy pups, there is no money in it and I'll show you why.

Again, as another breeder wrote on line; Be prepared to spend a *lot* of money on this litter. And know in advance that - if you do it right, you *will NOT MAKE* money! Be happy if you break even. Occasionally you may make less the price of one pup after you take into account the breeding expenses and raising a litter for a minimum of 2 months. I'll explain later. I know that many people don't see it and think that you get the dog and the bitch together, she will do what comes naturally and have the pups! Ha! Nothing is farther from reality.

If you're thinking about breeding and you think breeders may just be trying to discourage others to keep the "business" for themselves, please take a few minutes to read this booklet and make sure you know what you're getting yourself into. Breeding - again, should be done solely out of love for and pride in the Dane breed and to promote it and improve it - and you must have top quality Danes that *ALSO* carry only the good genes. As I'll explain, a good Dane may be carrying inferior genes that he/she will pass them on to his/her offspring.

In this material, I'll use my 25 years of Dane experience and the experience of other reputable breeders (very - very few) who contributed educational material similar to this and posted it on line for all to use, to read and to be

educated on the subject. As such, my material and any other quotes I used here are to be treated as copyright protected in terms of any commercial use which is obviously prohibited. As such, this material is posted for free public education purpose only.

Well, I have been asked what is the fuss all about, you get a male and female, they mate, you have puppies .. they do it in nature in the wild .. so what's the big deal?

For one, do you know that in reality, in nature or in the wild, the average survival of a litter is less than 2 pups per a litter of 8pups? It's survival of the fittest plus factors beyond the puppies control - which we can control.

If you leave it to nature, between the pups that the mom didn't lick clean as soon as they born and never were able to start breathing, the pups born dead (perhaps died in the giving of birth moments - common occurrence) and you didn't revive them as soon as they were born with the basic up-down quick movement in the air in your hands to clear their lungs - or with a drop on the tong with a drug used for this purpose, the pups that mom accidentally steps or lied on, the pups that (still blind or eyes closed for 2 weeks) couldn't often find mom and the stronger ones pushed them away so they got no nutrition in the early critical stage, the pups that were born weaker and needed interference to give them priority feeding including bottle feeding and nutritional supplements, the pups that needed medical attention when in trouble in the first few days .. between all that - and more - you would be lucky if you have one pup survives out of 6 or 7 pups litter. Yes, they do it in nature, but, as I said, in nature about 1.5 pups survive out of average 8 pups litter (national geographic). So, you see, it is not really as simple as a natural process!

And, the 2 months pregnancy of the bitch can have the same argument. Many bitches have no problem, they get pregnant and give birth. Well, many more have complications and some even die during or before birth. Some die after birth because she had a dead pup inside that wasn't delivered. And in your case, you can't take a chance on the only (expensive and loved) bitch you have; therefore, well .. average 4 vet visits .. ultra sound and x-ray tests are a must to determine how many pups and how healthy (and they are alone \$350 + \$680).. delivery medication (if you're lucky and avoided the occasional emergency delivery vet call) .. the bitch's special diet (including

raw beef) at an average \$12 a day (\$360 a month) plus her mineral and multi vitamins supplement (you want all healthy pups, not what happen in nature) and here so far you're already looking at about \$2000 during the 2 months pregnancy.

And when you have the pups, and again, you don't want what happens in nature, you want a complete survival of a whole healthy litter or as close to that as possible, so .. you need a good diet .. I feed my pups goat milk, cottage cheese, eggs, ground beef and special balanced vet-purchased powder supplement along with other balanced blended large breed quality puppy food - you could be looking at \$5 to \$8 a pup a day just for food, yes, \$300+ a month per pup. Then, there is an average 2 vet exams @ \$80 each per pup (if there is no problem, just exam) and 3 vaccinations @ average \$75 = \$225 per pup.

Puppy mills produce abused pups that suffer malnutrition which affects their entire life. Imagine a human baby given only small servings of cheap processed food a day ,, surely you agree they will have problems that will affect their health likely for the rest of their lives. Well, some breeders measure a couple of cheap dry dog food a day per pup. Now compare that to a well fed baby, given quality milk, supplements and later quality fruit, veggies & proteins .. that is the difference between a kennel production pups and Danes with healthy and costly care foundation.

Similarly, imagine a pregnant woman with minimum nutrition and poor conditions, no doctor, no tests and just leave it to nature. You see the risk and possible problems! The same applies to a quality breeding female Dane.

Botros Hamad, a reputable breeder explains; during the week 3 to week 10, each pup should get about 2 quality dog food cans daily (about \$1.8 each), plenty of quality dry puppy food, goat milk (about \$3 a pup daily), raw meat (about \$4 a day) and the blended recipe I'll present under pups' diet. You could be looking at an average \$10 a day per pup, \$200 a pup on the first month and \$300+ a pup in the second, and by 8 weeks each pup would have cost you about \$500 already, then you have the additional \$300 per pup expenses I explained, The average pup cost me about \$800 by age 8 weeks and that excludes extra vet visits, ears cropping, CKC papers, shipping .. etc .. that's just when they are ready go to their new homes.

The other day I took my 4 pups to the vet for what I thought would be basic vaccine at a discounted breeder rate of \$65 a pup; only to find out that two pups had ear infections after and the additional exams and treatments and the vaccines came to a simple \$600 visit.

All this is not taking into consideration many other expenses such as the pre-breeding special OFA health tests which are very expensive, AKC - CKC registration costs, ears cropping if done is alone \$350 a pup, microchip (required for registration) another \$100 a pup, advertisement costs which isn't cheap at all, the whelping room equipment, hydro - heat & air conditioning for pups during the first 6-8 weeks so they would all survive, hired care help which can be very costly if you don't have family members to take shifts during the first crucial 5 weeks - and more, much more believe me. So you see, I'll leave it up to you to do the math and you'll then understand why I said if you break even you're lucky.

And that's just the money or cost aspect. The real challenge is producing quality pups and that we'll discuss here.

Of course those of you who have or will purchase a Dane for a companion only, need not even read this chapter because your dog should *never* be bred. Your dog was purchased as a pet because he or she (though may be of a good quality and a good looking Dane) - but, did not have that exceptional conformation that made him/her worthy of breeding. Now I know this sounds a bit elitist, but there are good reasons why the breeder designated your dog to be of pet quality. Not every dog needs to be bred and that in no way demeans the wonderful attributes of your loved pet. Dedicated breeders strive (or *should* strive) to breed only from the very best specimens in the breed in order to, hopefully, keep improving the overall quality in the breed from litter to litter. If the breeder of your pet quality dog *did not* sell you the dog on limited registration or specify that your dog should not be bred and you're actually thinking of breeding it, please give serious attention to the following.

SELECTING AND EVALUATING A BROOD BITCH

If you want to be known as the breeder, you must own the bitch, not the dog. The Kennel Club identifies the bitch owner as the breeder. In that light, *any* Great Dane bitch can produce a litter of Great Danes if she is

mated to another CKC (or AKC) registered Great Dane. However, we want to produce a litter of outstanding, healthy, good tempered, long lived Great Danes. Great Danes who will grow into dogs who will bring happiness to their new owners.

Becoming a dog breeder is a serious responsibility. The little puppies that you will cause to be born, have no choice in the matter, nor do they have any control over the life that they will live. You, and only you, are fully responsible for this so you must make some informed decisions. This begins with the decision to breed your bitch or to purchase a bitch for this purpose. If you are already an established breeder, the chances are that you already have a lot of knowledge as to what combinations of parents should produce the best litter. The operative word here is "*should*". There are many well-known breeders who will breed bitches without health checks, or who will overlook the fact that the bitch or stud has a poor temperament. Please, before you decide to breed, be honest in your evaluation of your bitch. A championship title is no guarantee that a bitch should be bred. If you have doubts, consult a fellow breeder whom you respect. Sometimes we become so involved with our dogs that we can't see the faults that may be obvious to others. This is called 'kennel blindness' and no one should breed if they're afflicted with it. These are the breeders that consistently produce garbage, year after year, litter after litter. I know of several. Some are even 'well-known'.

If your bitch *is* of breeding quality, there is still a lot to consider prior to making the decision to breed.

Whelping a bitch and raising a litter is a full time responsibility. You cannot expect your bitch to take care of the puppies on her own during the day while you're at work and expect most of the pups to make it. As I said, when this happens in the wild, nature survival is less than 2 pups per litter. You need to be with her for at least the first 3-4 weeks of the babies lives. A new litter will turn your household upside down.

Consider that the pups usually wait until you've fallen soundly asleep to start arriving in the middle of the night. You can usually count on at least a few sleepless nights, and probably several so you can be sure that none of the puppies get squashed by mom. Even the most careful dam can sometimes hurt a puppy this way without meaning to.

You need to be close by for at least 4 weeks so that blankets can be washed and changed and messes cleaned up. Once the puppies are being weaned you'll be providing from 4 to 5 meals a day. And what a mess they will make. It often takes me $\frac{1}{2}$ hour to clean up the floor, wash the food off the pups that mom missed and then police the area for any stray poops/pees, only to do it all over again a few minutes later. Just when you think you cleaned the pups floor area, another pup or two poop and quickly others step into it and you have to clean again .. with a full litter, this is non-stop all day, and they have to be kept clean specially with no vaccine immunization yet and their only protection is the anti-bodies they get from the mom's milk they managed to get.

As the pups become older and leave the whelping box your work *really* begins. 10-15 poop runs a day is at least average! Keeping fresh newspapers down, providing lots of attention and socialization, mopping up the spills around the water dish when they begin to learn how to swim (and, incidentally, drink water!) and generally being nearby in case someone gets into trouble such as getting stuck between mom and the wall.

Now that they're older you need to begin lead breaking and socializing outside the property as soon as they have enough vaccines in them, around 8 weeks of age.

Jill Swedlow, who is quoted here several times (and Paul Farouk and Joseph Broniovich) wrote: What if your bitch gets sick of it and decides to limit her attention to the pups or refuses to nurse them after a week - or even dies! it happened to a friend of mine when her litter was 4 days old? She had to hand raise a litter of 7, and it about did her in! All pups were bottle fed rather than tube fed as puppies need the time sucking to become well adjusted. She got little sleep for the next 5 weeks. The puppies also had several problems and had to be taken to emergency care. (Talk about making huge profits from breeding dogs! Ha! I think the final vet bill total came to around \$5000.00!) She ended up losing a great deal of money even taking into account that she sold all the pups.

And, be prepared any way for bottle feeding as a supplement if you have a large litter of 6 or 7 or more pups. Mom won't have enough milk to feed them all and they start to bite hard on her nibbles and she will walk away from

them. The average pup will need about 10 bottle feedings a day, it'll keep you busy all day.

Just be sure that you are willing to give up having a life of any kind other than being a gofer for your bitch and her litter until they go to their new homes. So if you've decided that this is what you want to do, read on.

My First Litter - a testimony written by another breeder:

My foundation bitch was a big girl with a lot of bone and substance.

Not long after I bred her she began increasing in width just as a pregnant bitch is supposed to. Then I noticed that she seemed to be shrinking! My vet and my friends assured me this was nothing to worry about. When she first started whelping I was sound asleep. What came out of her were black, tarry things that looked like crow skulls with some black material attached. Yuck! So at 7 AM this was my introduction to whelping a bitch. Then I found more of these strange objects around the house. I think about 4 of them. Then, once she actually began producing whole puppies, most of them were dead! I ended up with a live litter of 3, 1 bitch and 2 dogs. My friend had to revive one of the pups with CPR! This litter was born on my birthday and I hope I *never* have another birthday like this one! I was so emotionally exhausted, and so disappointed to only have 3 live pups (The litter must have been huge as there were 4 black things and about 5 fully formed dead pups besides the 3 that lived!) I didn't know then how lucky I was! A litter of 3 or 4 is really fun. Many more than that is pure work! (Fun work, but work nonetheless).

Because I didn't get the bitch I wanted in this first litter, the breeding was repeated. It consisted of 3 bitches and 4 dogs. One of those bitches turned out to be my first champion.

From the time I began exhibiting her, many of the handlers were hinting around about handling her. She was a gorgeous puppy. Handling fees being what they are, I decided to handle her myself, at least through the puppy classes. I'll tell you, I was one inept handler, too! The first time the judge pointed at us for Winners Bitch, I stopped dead in the centre of the ring,

stupidly pointed to myself and said, 'who *me?*' The second time she took points from puppy, I did the same thing. After that I decided that she obviously didn't need a handler but I'd have to remind myself not to go, 'who *me?*' when we won!

I guess the point of all this is to remind you that breeding is time consuming, hard work and can often be heartbreaking

EVALUATING A BITCH FOR BREEDING

The first thing that will probably attract you is the general 'type' that certain lines and families produce. Once you've decided on this, start asking questions about what health and temperament evaluations the dogs in the pedigrees have had. It's unlikely that you'll be able to trace these traits for every dog, but at least try to get an idea. It isn't too much to expect that the dogs for the last 2 or 3 generations (hopefully more) have at least had their hips evaluated for hip dysplasia.

Before you take the first steps to breeding a bitch, it's a good idea to have at least a working knowledge of genetics.

Selecting a Stud for Your Bitch

Your bitch has finished her championship. Her temperament is wonderful and her conformation worthy of passing on. You are fully prepared to be responsible for her puppies until the day they die, no matter that they live elsewhere. Her OFA hip rating came back normal as did her thyroid screening. (These are the 2 tests I consider *essential* when I screen my own bitches and for studs I breed to). I also screen for cardiac normality. Unfortunately, unless the dog has a heart problem at the time, the screening test cannot predict that she or he will *never* have a problem. I guess we just do the best we can with the tools we have. You're ready to breed her!

Judges are supposed to evaluate dogs in a positive manner, rather than 'fault judge'. But when you evaluate a bitch for breeding, you must know the faults that need improvement as well as the assets, in order to select the right mate. If you have a bitch that toes in, you do not select a mate that toes

out. You select a stud that is *correct* for this trait. Otherwise you'll get puppies that toe in and puppies that toe out. Do not overcompensate for your bitches faults.

When you think you've found the future sire of your litter, one who is correct where your girl is faulty, but also has most of her desirable traits, you next need to find out about his relatives. What about *his* sire and dam? Were *they* also correct for the traits you're trying to improve? What about siblings? Aunts and uncles? Check them all as this will give you a much broader picture of what the genetic make up of this male might be. Of course one of the most *important* things to look at are any puppies he has sired along with their dams. If the dams have some similar faults to your bitch and the puppies are correct for the traits, it's a good bet that this dog can help to accomplish your goals.

The pictures of the two Danes shown here illustrate a pair of dogs that compliment each other. The litter is even better than I hoped!

When you're evaluating possible sires, *please* make temperament one of your priorities. This breed is far too large to excuse dangerous temperaments. I'm sorry to have to say that there are some well known breeders out there who care little for temperament! Some of the most frequently advertised and top winning animals are overly aggressive or too shy. The owners continue to breed them or allow them to be used at stud. I think that this is both irresponsible and criminal! The Dane's title is the "Gentle Giant" or "The continental gentleman". Danes are loving, affectionate, sharp, friendly and lively companions.

So, you've selected the best stud you can find for your bitch and you've signed the stud contract and fully understand what it does and does not guarantee. As your bitch's season nears, you have several things you must do prior to breeding.

What To Do Before You Breed

Brucellosis testing

Most stud owners have, as their minimum requirement, a request that your bitch be tested for brucellosis. This is a disease that will render both bitch

and stud sterile, for which there is no cure. You should also request this test from the stud owner as well as a copy of the test. You should produce a copy of your bitch's test, too.

Additional testing

You should provide the owner of the stud with copies of the OFA papers and all other health tests that have been performed on your bitch and the stud owner should have provided you with same. If the dogs are microchipped or tattooed, it is desirable to have the vet who performs these tests, verify that he is, indeed, testing the dog that is represented.

It isn't uncommon for dogs that are clear for certain health traits to be substituted for others that aren't. Without permanent identification, there is no way the veterinarian who performs the tests can verify that the dog is who it's purported to be. If the dog's ID is shown on the test papers, you can be assured that the dog is really clear.

Cultures

I routinely have my bitches cultured a couple days after they come into season if they are to be bred. I request a culture and sensitivity be run. This way, if there's an unusual growth of anything, we know immediately which antibiotic it's sensitive to. Vaginal flora are a normal occurrence in the vagina. However, if one of these organisms produce a large growth, it's a good idea to control it.

If you should be unlucky enough to have a growth of mycoplasma show up, it would be a good idea to forget breeding on this season. Mycoplasma almost always results in either no pregnancy or dead/dying puppies. Best to treat the infection and try for the next season.

Rather than using a systemic antibiotic, I prefer to use an antibiotic douche. Most often these organisms are sensitive to Gentocin which your vet can make into a douche solution for you.

Douching your bitch is easy. A 500 cc dose syringe and a stallion catheter is all you need. The bitch, being in season, usually is quite receptive to having the catheter inserted. It will usually go up into the vagina about 8 inches. You then depress the plunger and you're done. I douche my bitches for 2

days, AM and PM, prior to breeding. *DO NOT* douche within 48 hours of the breeding as you may kill the sperm.

Stud owners would be wise to occasionally culture their studs sheath and treat any problems accordingly.

Progesterone Testing

Depending on the breeding method you use, progesterone testing may become necessary. I progesterone test even for a natural breeding, especially if the bitch or stud are virgins. If you're doing an artificial insemination or shipping chilled fresh or frozen semen, you *must* do progesterone testing. All progesterone testing *is not* equally accurate so talk to other breeders and stud owners who have used these methods, and go to the vets and laboratories who have had the highest rate of success.

Semen Evaluation

If the stud is a virgin, or if he's missed his last bitch, it's a good idea to have a specialist do a semen evaluation. Even though it only takes one sperm to fertilize one egg, it's necessary to have a very high number of active, normal sperm in order to impregnate the bitch. Ask the stud owner for a recommendation or contact one of the cryobanks that collect and store sperm.

The Bitch's Estrus Cycle

Most bitches will come into season every 6 months beginning from the age of 9 months or so. Mine tend to have their first season after the age of 10 or 11 months. For some bitches it is normal to cycle every 4 months. For others, every 5 months or even only once a year can be the norm.

The first thing you're likely to notice when your bitch comes into heat is the discharge of blood from the vulva. If you have a really bad case of 'puppy fever' and you've been watching your girl like a hawk, you'll notice that the vulva will swell prior to seeing the first discharge. Every book I've ever read on this subject tells us that the discharge will change to a 'straw color' as the bitch approaches the time she's fertile. I've *NEVER* seen this in my bitches. They continue to bleed right through the breeding dates. The only

change I've ever seen is that the blood becomes a little more dilute as the days progress.

If you're planning a natural breeding, you may wish to skip progesterone testing and go by what the dogs 'say'. If this be the case, you might want to present the bitch to the dog on her 10th day for a first 'check'. The most common breeding dates are day 11 & 13 if you're going to do only 2 breedings. These are the most common 'fertile' days for the bitch, but remember bitches can fluctuate. If you've followed this rule on a virgin bitch and she came up empty, I'd strongly suggest progesterone testing prior to breeding on the next season. Some bitches are fertile on day 8 and some not until day 18! (Days are counted from the first time you see blood discharged from the vulva).

Natural Breeding

Again, the female basically has average one fertile day, sure some have two days but also many have only a few hours. So breeding must be well planned and prepared for. That also includes handling the female with care and getting her to rest (not run) to preserve the semen in her. That's another reason why in nature many pregnancies don't "catch" .

The author of one of the 4 articles I utilized wrote:

When I take my bitches to be bred, I ask the stud owner about their procedure. I much prefer to begin with both dog and bitch on lead and the bitch unmuzzled. I like them to be able to say 'hi' first and play a little, which is what nature intended. Even if a bitch isn't ready, and snaps, it's highly unlikely she's going to harm the male. She's just warning him to 'stay away' and he'll understand this and comply. Sometimes he can talk her into standing while he mounts, and other times, it's just not quite the right time.

On another note, if a bitch will not stand and tries to savage the dog, she should not be bred at all. One of the most important traits for which one should select is fertility, and dogs who breed readily. It's interesting to note here that the dam of the litter mentioned above that had the temperament and health problems, was a very reluctant breeder. I had to muzzle her and hold her up in order for the stud to breed her. Guess she

knew more than I did! I remember too, that her *sire* *GROWLED* during the tie! The resultant litter was full of problems, both temperament and health.

Natural breeding is the most common and most successful method of breeding. Even with all the scientific advancements I still believe that the dog and the bitch know best when the moment is right!

I like to allow the dogs to meet each other while held on a 6 foot lead. Some dogs will greet the bitch and invite her to play with him. If the bitch seems so inclined, it's to everyone's benefit to let them both off lead in a small enclosure and let them play. The dog will usually try to mount right away. If the bitch is receptive, she'll brace her hind legs apart, and 'flag' her tail to the side. Often you can allow the tie to occur before steadying the bitches head and helping the male to turn.

The 'tie' occurs when the bitch's vaginal muscles contract and hold the 'ball' that forms at the base of the penis. The natural impulse of the male is to dismount with both forelegs on one side of the bitch. He will then lift a hind leg and try to turn so that the dogs are tail to tail with only the tie holding them together. It is during the tie that the bulk of the sperm is ejaculated. The first fluid is usually clear seminal fluid. When the fluid becomes milky, it's full of sperm.

Be sure and have a good hold on the bitch's head when the tie occurs. This is often painful for her and she may try to turn and bite.

If the dog is interested and trying to breed, and the bitch is standing well but they're just not connecting, don't panic. The chances are that you're a day or two early. Commonly, when you try on the following day, it's a case of instant tie!

Often the handlers want to constantly interfere with the dogs in an attempt to facilitate the breeding. It's been my experience that the dogs are far more adept than we are and if left alone, will accomplish the breeding when the time is right.

Another breeder added:

The first time I ever attended a breeding was a real education! I was rooming with Penny Twaits whose mother Kathleen Twaits, together with

Jackie White, shared the Tallbrook Farm's prefix. (It's all Penny's fault that I'm involved with this hobby!) It happened that Penny and I were at Kathleen's house when a young, virgin bitch was brought over to be bred to Tallbrook's Darby Dan, also a virgin. The dogs were introduced and all seemed to be proceeding normally. The bitch was interested, Darby was doing his thing, but they were having trouble. The bitch was not very tall and Darby was having trouble lining up with the target.

This went on for hours it seemed! They'd try, fail, get too tired, or Darby would get an outside tie, and we'd put him away to rest for awhile. Then someone got the bright idea of propping the bitch's rear up a little higher. Out comes Darby again and it looks like its working! He's certainly closer to the target than before. But still he's getting outside ties. (Outside ties means when the male penetrates partially and the ball the forms at the end of the penis expands outs as opposed to inside the female).

After about 3 hours of this, Darby returns from still another rest period and is happy to keep on trying. I'm standing behind him just as he begins to penetrate the bitch. Without thinking, I put my arms around Darby from the rear, grabbed onto the bitch's stifles, and held Darby against her with my pelvis. Everyone starts laughing at me and it suddenly occurred to me the picture we must present. Here's the bitch standing with her butt in the air, Darby is mounted on her, and I'm mounted on him and he and I are thrusting away at this poor bitch! (Yes, there *was* a litter. At least they didn't put my name on the pedigree!)

Artificial Insemination

This method is used under several circumstances. When a stud won't or can't, breed properly, when the stud is many miles away and you don't want to ship the bitch, or when the stud has died and his semen has been stored.

Whether you're using frozen semen or cooled, you and your bitch will have to put yourselves in the hands of the experts. The bitch is inseminated in one of 2 ways, surgically or transcervically.

Surgical insemination requires that the bitch be anesthetized and the semen is introduced directly into the uterus through an incision through her side her side.

The procedure with Tran cervical insemination introduces the semen directly through the cervix into the uterus and the bitch does not need to be sedated. Until recently there was a higher rate of pregnancy with the surgical procedure but I understand that not it is equally successful transcervically.

In either case the bitches hormone levels must be closely monitored prior to breeding. The bitch is only fertile for a very short period of time and it's just prior to this that the insemination must occur. Make sure that the vet performing this procedure has had a great deal of experience and success.

Sometimes it's necessary to do an artificial insemination even though the stud is right there and seems willing, but cannot achieve a breeding. In a case like this, you still need knowledgeable people around. It's not enough to simply collect the semen and squirt it into the bitch. There's a reason for the 'tie'. It's during the tie that the bitch's vaginal and uterine muscles are contracting and helping to move the semen along into the uterus. Because of this the vet or technician must 'feather' the bitch. This involves inserting 2 or 3 fingers into the vulva as high as possible and then knotting them to simulate the stimulation she would get from a tie. It's also a good idea to gently pull against the vulva as would happen during a real tie.

Pregnancy, Is She or Isn't She?

You'll never know how long 63 days can be until you're waiting for your first litter! Such an exciting time and there's much to be done while you're girl is cooking the kids.

First you'll want to verify that she is, indeed, pregnant. There are 3 methods of doing this. The first, oldest and least accurate, is palpation. The vet will check the bitch at approximately 28 days post breeding. He will feel the uterus through the abdominal wall in an attempt to palpate the walnut sized fetuses. In smaller breeds this is probably much more accurate but in *Great Danes* very difficult.

The next, and most accurate method of early pregnancy detection, is ultrasound. This test is performed at about 32 days post breeding. The bitch is laid on her side and the vet will squirt some contact jelly on her abdomen to facilitate the 'reading'. The fetuses are difficult to see to an

untrained eye. They basically look like black holes! If the vet counts 4 puppies, you can almost always count on twice that number! It's hard to do an accurate count.

The *most* accurate method is when a live puppy falls out of your bitch! There is no longer any doubt that she's pregnant, but this is not early detection.

Please *DO NOT* X-ray your bitch in early pregnancy to check for puppies. You could do harm to the fetus at this early stage. Only agree to X-ray during the last few days of a pregnancy if for some reason you simply *have* to know how many puppies there are. The other good use of X-ray is to verify that there are no more puppies after whelping. Most vets can easily palpate to verify this, making X-ray unnecessary.

When Skylark had her litter she seemed fine, all 8 babies were fine and I had no idea that there was still one more puppy up there. I just packed her and her babies up and off we went to the vets for the routine post whelping check and pit shot. The vet said she felt another puppy in her and wanted an X-ray to see how it was positioned. She wasn't sure if it was dead or alive. I figured it must be dead after all this time. The bitch had begun to whelp around 8 PM the previous evening and it was now about 9 AM. I was quite worried as I sure didn't want Skylark to have to go through a C-section for the *last puppy!*

She was given IV calcium and a pit shot to stimulate contractions and she and I went out into the van to await developments. About 20 minutes later after a couple half-hearted contractions, Dr. Eaton came out to check on her and gave her another pit shot. Suddenly here came the contractions and, hallelujah, the *PUPPY! AND HE WAS ALIVE!* If we hadn't checked her it's possible that she could have died from infection caused by that last puppy had it not passed.

So your bitch has been verified to be in whelp and it's time to get everything ready. What will you need? What should you expect?

What to Expect During Gestation

Obviously you'll expect your bitch to become much larger as her pregnancy progresses. Depending on the number of puppies she's carrying, this is a reasonable expectation. Trouble is, it doesn't always happen! Great Danes are *BIG* dogs and there's a lot of room in there for puppies to hide! A bitch carrying a litter of 1 or 2 puppies may not show at all! While a bitch carrying 9 might only look to be having 2 or 3! My little Narcissus was a good example of the latter! She was a little girl to begin with, standing only about 30½ inches tall. At only a few days before whelping, I thought she'd maybe have 4 at the most. No one was more surprised than me when she had 9 puppies!

Be prepared for the possibility of a personality change. Until Skylark, all my bitches became quieter and more loving and snugly than normal during their pregnancies. This is, of course, a nice change. Then I bred Skylark and I got an education in the power of female hormones! Lark, who was the baby in the family and had always been the omega bitch (bottom of the heap) suddenly became SUPER BITCH! She personified the word 'bitchy' as applied to temperament. Every time I turned around Lark was attacking one of the other bitches. Never her mother Poppy, but poor Jonquilla and Narcissus were fair game! She'd strut around the house as if it had been built for her and her alone! She'd pull herself to her full height (in her case that's TALL) and give the two old ladies the evil eye. It got so bad that I would kennel her when I had to leave the house, even if for 15 minutes to go feed the horses. On the advice of a handler friend, I kept a large cooking spoon upstairs and downstairs. She told me that if a fight started, to shove the spoon into the mouth of the dog biting and it would let go immediately. I also kept some pepper spray on hand.

I was really devastated because I thought my sweet and silly Lark-a-Loonie, had changed into some terrible devil. Once she'd whelped and the puppies were 4 and 5 weeks of age, she began to return to the old Lark we all knew and loved.

While on this subject, I should mention a couple other things that happened to Skylark during her pregnancy. One morning about a week prior to her due date, I awoke to find Lark standing by my bed with her back kind of hunched up and her neck stretched out ahead of her. When she'd move her neck side to side she'd cry out. All I could think of was that she'd slipped a disk or something. She'd move around and ate, but you could see that certain positions were painful.

My vet examined her and asked me if I believed in chiropractors. (Now I've always thought they were quacks, but I believed in and trusted my vet). After expressing my opinion, I agreed to take Lark to the recommended chiropractor. Dr. Eaton said that Lark's neck felt like it was 'out'. When we arrived at the chiropractor's office, she examined Lark thoroughly and had me place my hands on a place in her neck where there was an obvious 'hole'. After adjusting Lark (very gently I might add) she warned me that she may be worse the next day but should improve by day 3. She had me feel her neck where the 'hole' had been and it was gone! Sure enough, day 2 found her really gimpy but day 3 she was almost back to her old self!

I had been instructed to return with Lark for one more adjustment prior to her whelping date. I had been so impressed with Lark's improvement, that I had her adjust me too! (I've had low back pain for years). I improved along with Skylark.

What caused Lark's problem? Dr. Eaton explained to me that when the pregnancy hormones begin to circulate, they cause the ligaments and soft tissues to relax to facilitate the whelping process. This affects the tissues throughout the body. In Lark's case, she is a 'boinger', she'll stand in one place and leap straight into the air about 3 or 4 feet. She's also *extremely* active. This, combined with the hormones, caused her spine more flexion than it should have and it moved out of alignment.

Items You'll Need for Your Bitch and Her Litter

1. Whelping Box

This is an enclosure where your bitch will give birth to the litter and where they'll remain until about the age of 3-4 weeks or until they start piling out onto the floor! You can purchase one of these already made from dog supply catalogues or make your own. I know one breeder who swears by those very large plastic wading pools that appear in stores in the summer. Being round they're a more natural shape for a whelping area. I might try one on my next litter. The biggest drawback I can see to them is having an easily changed and cleaned pad in the bottom.

My dad and I made my first whelping box. I think it would have held a litter of elephants, he made it so strong! It was on a base made of 2 x 4's and a

heavy plywood floor. It had sides that came up about 9 inches and then a 'shelf' had been run along each long side to keep the bitch from smashing a puppy against the side. (This, by the way, did not work as I extracted a couple puppies from between the wall and mom). [Some of the box shaped whelping boxes utilize 'pig rails'. This is a heavy dowel (about the size of the pole you would find in a clothes closet) that runs the length of the box about 6 inches up from the floor and about 4 inches out from the wall. Frankly I don't see what real good they'd do as a puppy could still become stuck between the rail and mom].

(I recommend building a mere frame similar to a bed frame, just the 4 outside lines of a box defining an area, say about a foot & half high. You can easily left it and replace a thin cheap plastic sheet under it that can be changed easily. This is what I do now with my dam Nifi. Another breeder recommends it later. I also added a shelf-like extension about a foot high off the ground and a foot wide on the inside of the 4 sides facing & covering in, so that the bitch is forced to be away from the box's side sheet and would have a lower chance of crushing a pup behind her "still can crush a pup on the inside").

After the first litter was born and I tried to find a place to store this 300 pound thing, I decided that there must be a better way. I removed the sides of the box and fastened each short end to the long side with hinges. This allowed the short sides to fold in against the long one, and the whole thing weighted about 20 pounds! The hinges that fastened the other long side to the two short sides used hinges with removable pins. All I have to do is pull the pins and it is all collapsed and easily stored.

This four-sided 'box' sits directly on the floor and I have a three-inch foam pad covered in naugahyde that completely covers the foam. From old blankets and sheets I made covers for the pad. The blanket is one side and the sheet the other. It fits onto the pad like a pillowcase. There's enough left over at the open end to tuck securely underneath the pad. The beauty of this cover is that it's easily removed and washed and the puppies can't become hidden under folds of a wrinkled blanket and stepped on or squashed by mom.

Put the whelping box in an area that is private. You want to keep other dogs, cats and people away from mom and her new family in the early days.

(Ideally, a whelping room with good heating, ventilation and running water & hose as well as a floor plumbing disposal set up to take care of washed away poop, blood and food remains.)

2. Tons of Newspaper!

You'll go through a lot of this during the actual whelping. I use the whelping pad and cover and then spread a very thick layer of newspapers down. After each puppy is born, I get the bitch up, remove the soiled papers and replace with fresh. I also use newspapers for the floor once the pups are out of the box and at the end of the box at about 2½ weeks when they start to look for a place outside the nest to relieve themselves.

3. Baby Scale (accurate to 1 gram and good for up to 5 lbs)

Each puppy is weighed at birth (in grams). The average Dane pup weights about 2 lbs at birth and that scale will good for about a week. Then they are weighed daily until about the age of 10 days. You'll also need a digital accurate scale for the 5 lb to 120 lb range they are going experience during the first 6 or 7 months. At maturity a large male can be 175 lb and up to even 200 lb or even over. (Too heavy though could be a danger sign of fat build up inside and the need for a special diet and exercise is then even of a greater importance).

4. Lots Of Little WARM Terry Cloth Towels/Rags

Use these for helping to 'pull' a puppy from the vagina (rarely needed, and done very gently and not by the head, neck or legs) but needed for sure to dry off newborns. A vigorous rubdown helps get the puppy crying which bring air into it's lungs, and helps stimulate it to move around. (The best way I find is to hold the pup firmly in both palms and raise him above your head and quickly "and securely" lower your hands down to your knees. This clears the lungs and he starts breathing. We did that with each pup. After the 7th pup, and after an hour of sitting by Nifi and waiting, we thought that must be it. We disappeared for a few minutes and Nifi had another beautiful brindle male but Nifi didn't clear him properly of the placenta which covered his face, and he died).

5. Garbage Can & Lots Of Garbage Bags

Self explanatory!

6. At Least 2 Mosquito Clamps

Use one to clamp the umbilical cord about 1" from the belly, the other to clamp about 1" past the first against the placenta and then cut the cord with dull scissors in between the 2. You can leave the one on the pup for a few seconds while you dry it and then remove.

7. Dull Children's Scissors (and string)

When the bitch bites the cord off, it isn't a clean cut, which means it bleeds very little. The dull craft scissors used by kids imitate this type of cut. (Sometimes the cut may bleed more than it should and you would need to tie it with string about half an inch from the pup's body).

8. Heating Pad

I use this in conjunction with the box below. I place the heating pad over only $\frac{1}{2}$ of the box bottom, under a towel. This way the puppies can move off it if it's too hot. As each puppy is born, it's given to mom to nurse. The nursing helps stimulate contractions. As another puppy is about to be born, I put all the previous puppies in the box to keep them from getting in the way. Once the puppy is safely delivered, he and all his siblings are returned to mom until the next pup comes along. This is also used in the box when transporting the puppies to the vet for their post whelping exam and for dewclaw removal at 2 days of age.

9. Card Board Box For Pups

A sturdy box about 18 by 24 inches with sides about 18 inches high, is about right. It makes a handy puppy carrier and a place to corral them while changing their bed.

10. Rectal Thermometer

Use this to monitor your bitch's temperature beginning about 3 days prior to the expected whelping date. When the temperature drops to below 99 (sometimes as low as 97 degrees F) you can be pretty sure that she'll go into

labor within 24 hours. Also monitor her temperature for a couple weeks post whelping to head off trouble.

11. Clock

Note the time (in writing, you'll be too nervous to remember!) when each puppy is born. If the bitch goes much more than 3 hours between puppies, you should give your vet a call. It might be fine, but let's not take chances.

12. Writing Pen

Obvious!

13. Different Colored Rickrack

I tie this around the necks of each puppy for identification. If you have a litter of all fawns, it really helps. Be sure and check how tight the collars are daily. These babies grow FAST!

13. Puppy Charts

I make a chart that contains the following information to be filled out as each puppy is born.

- A. ID collar (I put a collar of coloured rickrack around the neck of each puppy as it's born. In a litter of 10 fawns, this will help you keep track of who is who!) .. number them in Male & Female .. M1 .. M2 .. F1 .. and also marks .. etc.
- B. Time Whelped
- C. Sex
- D. Color of puppy
- E. Weight (in grams)
- F. I make a drawing of a puppy on its back and then fill in all white markings (other markings in the case of harls of course!) Helps with ID if the collar comes off.

14. Lots of Sleep Prior To Whelping!

I sleep within ear shot of my new litters so I can hear if someone is getting squashed or is lost or something. Some people sleep right next to the whelping box.

When Birth is Imminent

As mentioned above, once the bitch's temperature has dropped, whelping will commence usually within 24 hours. She'll probably do a *lot* of panting. She might even strain or appear to be having contractions. She might then decide to go back to sleep now that she's got you all nervous and upset!

I've probably missed my bitch's first whelps as often as not! Jonquilla did the above 'gee, guess I'll go back to sleep now' act and then proceeded to have her first puppy in her crate next to my bed! Daffodil gave no indication at all. We just went to bed and the next morning I awoke just as Daffi was getting off the bed crying, while a puppy was dropping out of her! (Poor little Kiwi was rudely awakened from fetal peace and comfort as she hit the bricks of the fireplace with her head!) (Hmmm, maybe that's why she was so silly!) And still another first puppy (Jonquilla again!) was born in one of my shoes in the closet! Jonquilla was the easiest whelper I've ever had! She didn't even strain. Suddenly a puppy was coming out and by the time I could grab it, Quillie had it all cleaned, placenta eaten and was pushing it onto a nipple to have its first meal!

Digging is very popular with most bitches, sometimes beginning soon after they're bred! But once contractions begin, digging begins in earnest. If you have a safe place outdoors (by safe I mean where they can't sneak off in the dark and have the puppies under a bush somewhere) it's helpful to allow them to go outside and dig, under supervision of course. This seems to help the contractions along. Otherwise, they'll be content to just dig up the newspapers you've so neatly spread in the whelping box.

As a puppy enters the birth canal, most bitches have several strong contractions, often accompanied by grunts. You'll see the vulva enlarge as the sac is presented and then out will come a puppy. If the bitch shows interest, allow her to clean off the sack and lick the puppy. If she doesn't do this right away, you need to clear the sack away from the puppy's face immediately. If the placenta is present, clamp the cord about 1 inch from the puppy's body with one mosquito clamp and again next to the placenta.

Then take the scissors and cut between the clamps. Leave both in place. The one on the placenta until you can dump it. If you don't, it will leak blood all over. The one on the puppy can stay until you've dried the puppy with the towels. Then remove the clamp. Be careful not to pull on the clamp and cause a hernia. (My own belief about umbilical hernias is that they're inherited).

If the puppy's breathing sounds very wet, hold the puppy upside down and support its head. Then extend your arms straight out from your body and quickly swing the puppy downward between your legs. The centrifugal force will help to clear fluid from the puppy's airways.

Next weigh the puppy and record all the information on the chart. Don't forget its rickrack. Puppy can now go on to mom and nurse until the next one starts to come. This will continue until the entire litter is born.

You can usually assume that the bitch is finished when she contentedly (and tiredly!) stretches out on her side and sleeps. Regardless of how certain you are that she's finished, you should still take her and the litter into the vet to be checked. Giving a pituitrin shot to the bitch is always a good idea as it helps to clean out the uterine debris. Please don't do as some breeders do and keep pituitrin on hand to give at home. If there's a malpositioned puppy still in there, the bitch could rupture her uterus with the help of the pit shot. Making sure she's finished is very important.

It's a good idea to continue to monitor the bitch's temperature for a week or to post whelping. Any rise above normal is a signal to get her to your vet. She could be getting an infection or going into eclampsia (milk fever), either of which could kill both her and the puppies.

Keep a close eye on the litter also. A quiet litter is a content litter. Constant fussing and the inability to settle down, can indicate a problem. It isn't uncommon for the puppies to go through a period of yellowish diarrhea sometime in the first week. A little is nothing to worry about and will usually clear up on it's own as their systems become used to digesting milk. But if the diarrhea is green or very smelly, call the vet.

Raising the Litter

The first 2 weeks of life are a breeze for you and constant work for the bitch! She cleans the puppies, feeds them and keeps them warm. Once they've had a day or two with their puppies, most Great Dane bitches are fantastic mothers, careful and loving of their puppies. They can also be very protective. Don't be surprised if your formally easy going girl becomes a tiger where her babies are concerned. **[INSERT PHOTO #12-27]**

Certainly she must allow *you* to handle them, but if she refuses other family members early on, don't push it. Once the puppies are two to three weeks old, most bitches will become more relaxed about leaving them and allowing other people to touch them. Strangers are still a no-no. If people come over to see the litter, either remove the bitch to a place where she's contained and cannot see what's going on, or only allow them to stand outside the room and look in.

Be careful about allowing other dogs in with her and the litter. Some bitches might really resent this. However, I've had some really cute mother/daughter teams raise the litter together! Daffodil did this when her daughter, Kiwi, had her litter. I'd find the two of them in the whelping box together. Daffi trying to roll the puppies around and play with them while Kiwi was nursing them.

I base my decision to begin supplementing the puppies based on their body condition and the mothers milk supply. Cricket had milk 10 days prior to whelping. So MUCH milk, that when she'd lay down, little milk fountains would spurt from her breasts! Her babies were rolling fat balls! At 4½ weeks old I decided to start them on solid food more so I could get some weight *off* of them!

Then there was Skylark's litter. Besides all the other problems Lark had that I mentioned above, she also had 2 others. Her uterine cramping continued for so long, and so severely, that she was seldom comfortable enough to lie still and let her puppies nurse. Even when they did nurse, she had very little milk. This resulted in very thin babies whom I began supplementing at the age of 2 weeks! (Oh, what a mess trying to get eight 2 week olds, who have barely begun to wobble around on their legs, to *drink* from a bowl!) But drink they did, and they are now fine! Needless to say, Larkie has been spayed! I refuse to put her through all that again.

In normal litters, supplementation usually begins around 3 weeks. I'll start them on a bitch's milk replacer mixed with some baby rice cereal. It's mixed to the consistency of uncoagulated pudding at first. Little by little I add ground up (in the food processor) kibble and canned Eagle Brand Beef, Liver or Chicken and Rice. I start them right out on what I feed the adults, which is Innova kibble and Eagle Brand canned.

By the time they're about 4 weeks, they're eating whole, soaked kibble, and by 6 weeks, the kibble is no longer soaked before feeding. Since I feed the litter together out of several bowls, it's difficult to tell exactly how much each puppy is eating. A six week old Dane puppy will likely be eating 1½ to 2 cups three times a day. By the age of 7 weeks, most of my litters were only picking at their lunch meal. When that occurs, they're shifted over to 2 meals a day. [INSERT PHOTO # 12-18]

The best way to judge if your puppy is eating enough (or too much!) is by his body condition. Dane puppies should be kept lean on a top quality food. You want to be able to *barely* see their ribs, but feel them easily. I know that most of us are anxious for our Danes to become huge. But please don't get hung up on the weight/height issue as your puppy grows. Early size and weight are *NOT* indicative of adult size and weight. Some of my smallest puppies have ended up as the biggest adults. And size isn't everything. Overall *quality* is far more important for a show dog.

CKC/AKC Registration:

There is an option for registration called 'Limited Registration'. This is a great tool for the breeder. Any offspring from a dog sold on Limited Registration cannot be registered with CKC/AKC, nor can said dog compete in conformation shows. However the breeder, and only the breeder, may remove this stipulation should the dog turn out to be a breeding/show specimen in the future. **(note that there is always the exception when a breeding-show quality looking pup may mature to be a good Dane but only a pet Dane, and a just "good" looking pet pup can turn to be a great show-breeding Dane).**

Selling/Placing Your Dane Puppies

As you well know by now, Great Danes are *not* for everyone. It is up to you, as the breeder, to do all you can to ensure that your puppies are placed in homes where they will happily remain for life. You can accomplish this by thoroughly screening your potential puppy buyers.

But first, people need to know that you have a litter available. If this is your first litter, you will probably have a little more trouble in placing the puppies than breeders with an established reputation. It's best, of course, if you have a list of people waiting for your puppies. But how do you reach these people? *DO NOT* advertise in the local paper. Although you can certainly find occasional good homes this way, they'll most likely be pet homes. This is also fine, but you've bred this litter to acquire show puppies. The best show potential puppy in the world won't earn its championship in someone's back yard!

Start with an advertisement in *Great Dane Reporter Magazine*. This magazine has a very wide distribution and people all over the world will see your ad. Include a good picture of both parents and the pedigree. You might also want to include an appealing picture of the puppies themselves. It's hard to resist a great puppy picture. **[INSERT PHOTO #12-29]** Don't forget to include your phone number and an email address if you have one.

The Internet is a good tool for advertising your litter. At least 4 or 5 puppy sites. You need to reach as wide a population target as possible in order to have a good home for every one of your pups and while they are still pups. The average cost for advertising is about \$65 an ad and \$150 for the magazine. My average advertisement cost per letter is around \$550.

You need good homes. Ask for references from other breeders they have purchased from. Even if this is a breeder you've known casually at the shows for years, ask questions and ask for references! I'm sorry to say that some of my *WORST* homes have been long time breeders! I've made the mistake of referring people looking for puppies to breeders whom I thought had a good reputation only to find out later that they did no health checks at all! Don't rely on reputation, find out for yourself.

Before you start asking questions, tell them everything that is wrong with the breed. Short life span, possible health problems, temperament problems

in some lines, food requirements, destructive ability, etc. I always do this and if the person is still interested, I start asking the questions.

Ask all the questions you were asked by the breeder from whom you purchased your first puppy. Do you have a fenced yard? Will he be a house dog? Can you afford an emergency bloat surgery that could cost up to \$3000.00 and would you have it done if necessary? Will you have a heart attack if the dog eats your couch/trees/shoes/fill-in-the-blank? Are you willing to spend a lot of time properly socializing and training the dog? Do you have a set up so the dog isn't spending 24 hours a day in his crate? Basically put the potential new owner through the same third degree outlined in Chapter 4.

If you're selling a puppy for show, please realize that by having one of your best show puppies in a good show home, you're utilizing the best advertising possible. Nothing upsets me more than having some new owner come to me with their inferior show hopeful. Once again some unscrupulous breeder has sold an inferior specimen as show. As long as you're reasonably certain that his is a good show home, you have nothing to lose and everything to gain by placing your superior pups in great show homes.

You can tell a lot about a person's attitude towards the dogs by the way they interact with them. I'm always suspicious of the person who stands away from the dogs with their arms folded over their chest. I really like it when someone gets down on the floor with the litter and lets them crawl all over them. These are the true dog people! You also need to *like* the people that buy your puppies. When someone buys a Sunnyside puppy, they also become a member of the family. Whether they buy a pet or show puppy, I want close contact with them until the day that puppy dies of old age! I bug them for information about how the puppy is doing, photos and require them to contact me if they have any questions or problems at any time. My contract stipulates that if they ever have to get rid of the dog, it either comes back to me or I have final say as to its new home.

'Pick of Litter' & What Price For a New Friend?

I cannot tell you how much you should charge for your puppies. The fact is you will not make up all you've put into them. But at the same time, it's nice to recoup some of the expenses as well as giving them a value in the eyes of

their future owner. (A show potential puppy will sell from between \$1800 to \$2800 and up. That may or may not be cropped. Pets can be found for from \$1000 to \$1700+). I would suggest that you ask some of your fellow breeders what they charge and then make up your mind.

I have been known to simply place a puppy in a home I know to be a great one and take much less for the puppy. A good home is the most important thing to me when I place my babies. Sometimes a puppy will be placed on a co-ownership or for one or 2 puppies back. These are all arrangements you must decide on at the time. Co-ownerships can be tricky and many friends have become enemies over these issues. This is one reason a contract is imperative! When I run into problems with a co-ownership (and I rarely have), I always make my choices in favour of the friendship. It isn't worth losing a friendship over the decision of which stud to breed the bitch to. I consider every co-owned bitch to be the sole property of her owner and the owner always has the final say. So what if I prefer she be bred to a different stud? Her owner is my friend and I intend to keep it that way!

CARE AND FEEDING OF GREAT DANES

FEEDING YOUR PUPPY

Great Danes are classified as a giant breed. They reach their ultimate height usually by the age of two years, but are very close to it at a year. Because of this extremely fast growth rate, they are prone to many skeletal growth problems. Recent studies have found that if you can slow the rate of growth, especially through the age where it is fastest (2-8 months), you can help prevent problems such as hip dysplasia, wobblers syndrome, hypertrophic osteodystrophy (HOD) etcetera.

To slow the growth on my dogs, I feed a dog food of 24% protein or less. Although you want to keep the protein levels around 24%, you must feed a premium food. Premium dog foods use meat as their protein source, lamb, chicken or beef. It is good to be aware of the terms used by dog food companies on their labels. Whole (chicken, lamb etc.) meal means that the entire animal is used. By-product meal is the least desirable as it usually means beaks, feathers and feet (in the case of chickens), which are entirely unusable protein sources for dogs. The first product listed on the

ingredient label makes up the highest percentage of the food. The methods used in processing, packaging and storing foods are also very important. One preservative to avoid is ethoxyquin as it has been proven to cause cancer.

Avoid artificial colorings and tomato pomace. Tomato pomace is the end product (mostly skin) after all the best parts of a tomato is used. This also contains the highest levels of pesticides of almost any dog food ingredient. For Danes, it's also nice to have a food that contains probiotics. These are natural digestive enzymes that may help prevent bloat, one of the common killers of Great Danes. I feed my Danes Innova dry and Eagle Brand canned foods. After doing a lot of research, Innova is the only food I recommend because all it's ingredients are human grade, the first 2 being chicken and turkey. I'm sure there are probably a couple other good products around, but Innova is so good I have no reason to change products.

DO NOT FEED any additive that will throw off the balance of the food you're offering. Next to lower protein, a calcium/phosphorus/vitamin D balance is essential. Throw the balance off (already contained in the food), and your puppy is on its way to bone problems. You *can* add canned foods that are also complete and balanced. You can safely add just about anything as long as it's no more than 15% of the dry food. I also support the raw meat diet which is the diet of nature.

Vitamin C is one supplement that you should definitely give. It is one of the few supplements that can do no harm and it is thought to be beneficial to growing dogs. Give 500 milligrams in the morning and evening meals for a total of 1000 mg per day. Your Dane should eat its food in two meals per day rather than one large one. Water should always be available.

GENERAL CARE & msc notes:

1- during the early stage of breeding including whelping of the puppies:

Quick notes and list of items you will need.

Notebook & pen,

scale as indicated accurate to the gram,

wall thermometer to make sure that the area is warm, about 90F. A puppy getting cold is very dangerous and it's something you must avoid.

Heater.

Scissors to cut the cord if the mother fails to (it happens in nature, or the mother waits too long when in pain)

Thread to tie the cord if bleeding

Shaving styptic stick to apply to bleeding such as the puppy's cord tie area

Rectal thermometer

Hand towels

Lots of newspapers

Goat milk (or espilac product) .. no cow milk as it gives pups diarrhea and that is a pup killer at this stage.

Oxytocin injection to stimulate contraction in the bitch (as well as stimulating milk production) if she has a problem, is clearly due and in pain. The bitch gets 2cc in the muscle in the rear if the bitch has not had a pup for an hour after the labour temperature confirmation below - and the bitch's behaviour show that she is in labour with visual contraction but no pups, and she is having difficulties. Many bitches die in this stage if not helped,

Amoxicillin (oral) - powder to mixed with water, if a pup needs tube feeding in which case the pup is placed on amoxicillin for 5 days,

Dopram - V .. a small drop under the pup's tongue to stimulate the respiratory system if a pup born not breathing after trying to revive him by clearing the lung as explained later.

Kero syrup

Tube feeding equipment including a 20 cc syringe

Starting on the 52nd day of pregnancy (you kept record of date of successful tie) record the bitch's baseline temperature twice daily (101.5 F). 24 hours before whelping it will drop to 98.7F and just before labour it will go back up to 100F

If the placenta is stuck to the bitch, hold the cord and pull it out of her, if not, cut it 2 inches from the pup's stomach; tie the cord with a thread to prevent bleeding.

The pup should start nursing immediately as the anti-bodies in the bitch's blood are essential. If the pup can't latch on a nibble, wet it with finger using your own saliva - it works, you also need to rotate pups so that weaker ones get the back nibbles where usually there is more milk.

If a pup is not breathing, quickly blow air into his nose. You can use a ready on a standby nasal aspirator. The quick swing up and down from beside your head to your knees with the pup in your hands (once or twice only) should clear his lungs.

If a pup is warm, place him in small tray with warm water (head above water). Any water in the lungs at this stage is fatal. Dry him with a mixture of water and karo syrup. Also when bottle feeding, do not use a bottle nibble with a large hole as the pup does not yet have good control of his faculties and if he inhales milk into his lungs it can be fatal. Also make sure the milk is warm, puppies cannot digest cold milk at this stage,

Make sure no one else is allowed near the bitch and the puppies and to put extra effort into comforting the bitch.

2- a quick scan of weekly duties at stage 1:

Vaccination of puppies:

At 8 weeks: distemper, parvovirus, coronavirus, CAV2-hepatitis, parainfluenza

At 12 weeks: repeat (booster) of all of the above again

At 16 weeks: again all of the 12 weeks vacs mentioned above, plus rabies and bordetella. (All of which are repeated at age 1 year and thereafter annually).

Some regions have reported cases of infections that may require additional vaccinations such as: L. Pomona, L. grippotyphosa, L. canicola, Lyme, leptospira icterohaemorrhagica.

As well, de-worming (2cc Nemex II is commonly used, now more likely tablets) is to be done at 2 weeks and must be repeated 2 weeks later as medication will kill the worms but not the eggs which have 2 weeks gestation period. De-worming need to be repeated frequently.

The pup's eyes will close for the 1st 2 weeks and will need close supervision and assistance.

By the 3rd week teeth start to appear. Supplementary feeding moves up to next stage with puppy food and ground beef in the milk as a mush. At 21 days also liquid "Albon" is given for 5 days, 3 cc on the 1st day, then 1.5 cc for each of the following days to kill kakcydia which often causes diarrhea.

I personally serve this formula, and serve it as early as the 2nd week:

5 cups goat milk, 2 cups cottage cheese, 1 cup yogurt, 4 hard boiled eggs, 4 cups soaked quality puppy (giant breed) puppy food (Eagle Pack Giant Breed Puppy Formula is recommended by Anubis Great Danes), 2 cups balanced ground-beef based puppy can food .. in a blender ..

5th week pups will be allowed outside to socialize.

6th week pups should be removed from the mom at night and effort made during the day to prevent the pups from sucking on the mom's nipples. They should be given puppy can food and quality balanced dry food in goat milk. Remember that with a litter of 5 or more pups mom's milk will not be enough and in nature, survival of the fittest comes into effect. Pups need supplementary feeding from day 1.

Temperament and characteristic tests are performed at age 8 week and written down in details.

On the 7th day "Albon" treatment is given. Albon 500 mg is common. It's a 5 days treatment for both pups and the bitch. Pups: 1 day, 1 tablet and $\frac{3}{4}$ tablet for each of the following 4 days.

The bitch is given 1 tablet per each 20 lb of her weight for 5 days.

VERY IMPORTANT: remember that medication information given her are mere recommendation and guideline and each pup is different in terms of size and condition. As well, your vet may have combined medication and may separate doses of treatments for that reason. Therefore, consult with your vet and follow his recommendations.

2- Well, we know that Great Danes are not suited to being a back yard watch dog that gets little or no attention and rarely gets in the house. They are happiest and thrive when they are house dogs who are considered members of a family. Canines, are after all, a pack (family) animal. Although they are naturally pretty well behaved, they still need discipline and to respect their "pack leader" as well as *all* humans. To this end I highly recommend that you and your puppy attend obedience classes, and yes, they do have them for little puppies, they're usually called puppy socialization classes. Puppies, Great Dane puppies in particular, need more love and attention in the early stage of socialization. Those who leave the pups in cages in the backyard all day and sell them, sell problems that develop later.

Generally, Danes love the couch and the bed. Let them enjoy the comfort because they are children in the house and family members. Spoil them, they will appreciate it and show it. You'll see pictures of Anubis and Nifi with me or with my son on the couch watching TV. Danes want attention and human touch and affection. You must have the time and attitude to have a Dane. Definitely they are not dogs to be left in a yard or a dog house. Danes live to love and to be loved and love to love back.

Provide a large outside *fenced* yard for your dog to romp and play. Exercise is important for growing puppies as well as it is for adult Danes. If you have other dogs (larger than the puppy) and children, make sure that the dogs don't knock the puppy down or hurt it. Instruct your children on how to treat the puppy and make sure they know that a growing puppy needs many hours of sleep to grow properly. Don't let your kids tease the puppy. Ideally, you should never allow the children and puppy to play unsupervised.

Young children don't realize that certain actions will be harmful to the pup. Conversely, the pup may get too rough for the kids and those little needle milk teeth can do some damage, even in play.

Be sure that from the start you continue to lead break your pup (most breeders will have already begun this) and take it places in the car with you. Go to shopping malls and public places so the puppy will become accustomed to different sights and sounds. Encourage strangers to pet and play with the puppy. Don't allow the puppy access to other dogs until he has had at least his first adult vaccine. The same goes for attending puppy matches or shows.

EAR CARE, THE ISSUE OF CROPPING

If you have purchased your puppy from a reputable breeder, the chances are he has already had his ears cropped. Most breeders who show always crop their pups prior to allowing them to go to their new homes. One reason for this is that the breeder has control of who does the crop. A vet who isn't experienced with the proper procedures for ear cropping can really mess things up. Both the pup and the ear suffer! I'd much rather see an uncropped ear than one cut too short or done improperly. A vet with experience is the key here.

If you do have a pup that is or will be, cropped, that is not the end of the procedure. For ears to stand properly, they must undergo many tapings, often a couple of months. If you're inexperienced at after care, usually the vet who did the original crop can do the taping for you. If not, contact me as I have some pretty good directions as to how to tape the ears.

If you decide to leave the ears "natural", there are two problems you may have to face. Uncropped ears are prone to hematomas. These occur when the head is shaken violently and the tips of the ears "snap" as would a cloth towel when snapped at someone's butt! This action of the ear tips snapping back on itself can break the blood vessels within the ear, which then bleed and cause a painful swelling. This often has to be lanced at the vets and then the ears are usually taped up on top and across the head until the ear tips have healed. This can take some time. The other problem is that a drop ear is more prone to ear infections. Keep in mind that a dropped ear does not occur in nature and as such leaving them uncropped is not really a

"natural" claim. Man has created the drop ear during the development of the breed (the one original ancient breed was a wild dog with pointed up ears, not dropped) .. the dropped ears as I explained appeared much later when man crossed that wild Egyptian dog with 3 other large breeds and from there developed the medieval Dane. As such, dropped ears is man-made that resulted in ear infections and other problems, and the crop is man's way of correcting man's mistake.

I personally strongly recommend cropping. It makes a big difference on the graceful head image of the Dane. As well, if you have other dogs, they tend to pull and bite on the easy target of an uncropped ears, even playfully it still hurts. I compare cropping the Dane ears to the circumcision of my son. The hygiene issue is significant, and there is no pain or suffering during the procedure as the pet undergoes anaesthesia.

LIFE THREATENING EMERGENCIES: A WORD ABOUT BLOAT AND HOD (Hypertrophic Osteodystrophy)

HOD is a condition affecting young, fast growing dogs usually between 3 1/2 and 8 months of age. The symptoms are very high fever, swelling and inflammation of the joints (usually pastern) and tremendous pain. Even a lethargic puppy with a slightly elevated fever should be checked by a vet. If caught early enough, this disease will probably subside quickly.

Unfortunately, many vets don't recognize the disease and the puppy is neither diagnosed nor treated correctly. Immediate diagnosis is made by x-ray. The treatment consists of injectable vitamin C, steroids to combat the joint inflammation, Banamine which combats the pain (injectable form being preferred) and antibiotics to combat any secondary infections (pneumonia being the most common) which may take hold when an animal is badly stressed.

BLOAT usually occurs in dogs over one year of age but is not unheard of in younger dogs. The symptoms are attempts to vomit but producing only foam. The stomach and/or rib cage appears distended and continues to enlarge. The dog is in obvious distress and is usually panting and restless. **TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE.** The stomach is filling with gasses and beginning to rotate. This means that gas cannot leave the stomach and enlargement continues. As the stomach rotates, the blood supplies are cut

off and the animal begins to go into shock. The vet will usually try to pass a stomach tube to ascertain if the stomach has already turned and to relieve the gas pressure if it hasn't. (Occasionally you can pass a tube into a rotated stomach.) X-ray will confirm rotation. The dog must be stabilized before surgery (the only permanent cure) can be performed. Even then, it is not uncommon for a dog to die of heart complications after successful surgery.

* I have to comment here that in 25 years of Dane experience up to today's Anubis & Nifi, I have been very lucky and I have never experienced any of the several diseases or health problems we mentioned as possibilities. So, don't panic, we're only saying it happens, we heard!

GRADING YOUR LITTER

Deciding which puppies are show quality and which you'll allow to be placed as pets is the next step. If you've bred many litters and studied the outcome you should have a fair idea of what to expect as each puppy matures. As mentioned in another chapter, by the time the litter is six or seven weeks old, there are going to be some stand outs and you'll have begun to rank the puppies.

I rarely promise anyone a 'pick' puppy. I prefer to match the puppy with its new home in both quality (show vs pet) and personality.

Photos # A1 & A11 are Anubis and Nifi. Now compare the preceding notes to them. They are top quality show Danes. Pictures # AN 1 - 9 are the puppies of 1st litter to Anubis & Nifi .. note again the preceding discussed conformation and characteristics notes .. and examine each pup of this litter .. proudly, with potential 8 show quality and 1 top pet quality .. that is what I call successful breeding.

A well cared for Dane, given plenty of love, good diet and exercised, will live a long happy life and will be a source of happiness in your life. My last Dane lived 11 healthy years and so did the one before him. People don't understand the importance of emotional care of the Dane. They understand that stress kills people and we people have heart attacks and age quickly at young age; but many never think that same applies to animals. It is a fact

that a zoo animal lives a lot shorter life than in the wilderness. If the Dane is emotionally stressed by being isolated in a yard or at home alone while you're at work, don't expect him to live 10 years. I have seen Danes don't make half that because they are not happy. Danes' source of happiness is you, your presence, affection, your hand on rubbing his neck, setting with him, playing with him, praising him. Danes strive to please you and they live to love you and if not loved back, and is shown to them, they are stressed. If you can't accept that, you shouldn't have and certainly shouldn't ever think about one day breeding Danes.

In closing, breeding Danes is an art and it's a science. It's also hard, demanding and costly work. I'll leave you with this quote by another breeder, perhaps it'll get you thinking seriously before you commit to breeding:

"I purchased my quality stud from New Zealand for \$3,400 and my dam from Germany for \$4,500. With shipping and associated costs, it was a \$10,000 investment. I felt good knowing that I'll be breeding true quality Danes. What I didn't know is, just like a woman isn't advised to get pregnant after age 35, Danes should be bred between age 2-5 years only. The average cycle is every 7 or 8 months and that would give me an ideal goal of 3 breedings in 3 years keeping in mind that you actually shouldn't breed the same bitch every cycle, she would not have a chance to recover and rest and more pups will be born weak and dead; as well as shortening her life. Well, there I have already spent \$2,000 per breeding in advance. Now .. after 3 years, I advise every new breeder to reconsider. It isn't worth it if you are breeding for money. Here is a copy of my project finances:

I'll not include 4 major areas of expense submitted by Tom Greer;
the initial setup cost of over \$7,000 for the 2 dogs; stud & dam.
\$5,500 for the whelping room set-up including heating, ventilation and trench-plumbing;
\$2250 OFA tests of both parents, AKC/CKC registration, website and a few basic expenses;
and I will not also include (if it's a mere business aspect) the cost of feeding and raising the parents for at least 2 years before they can be bred. Even at a very modest \$3 a day per dog as I was told some do, it's \$200 a month for both parents, about \$4,500 in 2 years.

If we say it's a 5 years project "age 2-7 years, 10 breedings, with average 7 pups per litter, it would mean a minimum cost of \$300 per pup so far, before the pup is born!

Here is what I didn't include:

- whelping equipment: \$205, \$170, \$44, \$102, \$31, \$22, \$119
- whelping & puppies drugs: \$207, \$301, \$220, \$56
- pregnancy tests and bitch exams: \$337, \$541, \$140, \$401
- hydro for winder born litters: \$140 per month X 3 average
- diet, first 2 months: \$6 a day per pup = \$180 a month per pup
- vaccinations/vet, per pup: \$143, \$110, \$86, \$168
- ears cropping, per pup: \$285 + \$120 ravel & related expenses +\$80 related accessories / maintenance.
- registration, ACK/CKC/city: \$144 per pup

Well, you're looking at any where from \$700 minimum cost per pup to \$1450 per pup .. (I had a friend who was blessed with 7 pups litter, feeding them as reasonably cheap as he could afford, at \$5 a pup a day, \$35 a day for the litter, \$1100 a month, and with Vaccinations of \$200 a pup = \$14,00 (that is \$2500 in 1st month, almost \$4000 in 2 months that he had to pay in advance - and that is not including the much higher part of the other expenses I illustrated) .. he had to throw in the towel. He continues to write:

"And by-the-way, all that does not even take into account 3 weeks full time hard work by my 2 sons and daughter 24 hours supervision and help.

I called it quit after one breeding. I had no life for 3 months and it was no fun. I would have had to sell the pup for \$3000 to make the \$300 goal per pup. It just wasn't worth it. The worst part? Keeping your fingers crossed that you'll find buyers for all your pups! I was terrified I may end up with 3 or 4 pups that were growing very fast and no buyers. I had to lower price way past cost and I finally sold them all, the last of which was 4.5 months old. I found out that there are too many on line American puppy mill breeders and people either don't know, don't care, don't understand or just want cheap"

So how do some breeders do it and sell a pup for \$800 or even less?
They have puppy mills with no care and as such no guarantee. The buyer is the one with a problem. He pays a high price later”.

The bottom line is, breeding Danes is no fun and no money. It is a passion for those who want to promote and improve the breed. Think twice if disagree or if you underestimated the task.

The preceding material is a collection of write ups by 5 breeders including Paul Gouda the breeder of Anubis & Nifi's puppies. The material from 4 other articles by 4 other breeders were posted on line obviously to be read, and as such their use here in part is within the spirit of the intended free public educational posting. The use of the internet material herewith posted on line is strictly educational with no commercial aspect in any way.