

## CHAPTER 10

### BREEDING LÖWCHEN



Löwchen parents with their puppy.

Breeding Löwchen can be both fun and challenging but should never be taken lightly. Breeding should be done only with careful planning and thought. Dog breeding is best left to the professionals. The term professional does not mean those deriving their livelihood from puppy sales, but rather those who have invested much time getting to know the breed and understanding its bloodlines. They should be able to pick out the best quality breeding stock necessary to produce superb specimens of the breed. A knowledgeable breeder breeds dogs that are equally healthy, sound of mind and have excellent conformation. One should not breed dogs just to supplement the family income. There are too many unwanted dogs in the local pound to justify breeding for selfish reasons.

There are many avenues leading to being a quality breeder. To start, you must have a great and passionate interest in the breed. You must want to learn as much as possible about the dogs. Plan to spend much time and effort to become expert in Löwchen. One way to begin learning is by attending dog shows where Löwchen are exhibited, especially Löwchen specialties and annually held Regional and National Specialties. Once you have acquired your Löwchen, exhibit your dog to see how it stacks up in competition against other Löwchen. After

doing this for some time you should begin to learn to detect flaws and good qualities in

yours and others exhibitors' dogs. But only after seeing and going over many Löwchen can this happen.

Learn the Löwchen breed standard and understand it. Be able to apply the words to the dogs you live with and see in the show ring. The breed standard was developed to aid in preserving the breed as was intended. The description is an ideal that all breeders should strive towards producing. Consider the standard to be a blue print to the breed.

Along with exhibiting Löwchen, study dogs from the historical record and try to understand what qualities made them stand out. Understand the purpose of the breed. In the case of the Löwchen, they must be good companion dogs. What makes a good companion dog in your opinion? Once you determine that, figure out what are the desirable traits both inside the dog as well as on the outside.

Visit and talk with breeders. Ask them about their vision of a good Löwchen. If a breeder has been developing bloodlines for some time you will probably see a type or pattern emerge in their dogs. In some well-established bloodlines, you can pick out characteristics or traits stamped on each family member. Find out what traits breeders feel are vital to preserving the breed according to the breed standard. Usually the breeder from whom you acquired your dog will be happy to advise you in the early stages of your career as a breeder and should be able to help you establish your breeding program.

Ideally, the only reason to breed is to preserve and improve on the Löwchen, producing dogs that adhere as closely to the standard as possible. By breeding from pet quality dogs you are not helping the breed. Rarely do pet quality dogs produce dogs better than themselves. Many people justify breeding from pet quality dogs by reasoning they are only breeding to produce other

pets, not show dogs. While that may be so, those pets can, in each successive generation, look and act less like Löwchen, eventually resembling a mixed breed. Have you ever seen a dog on the street, which resembles a breed with which you are familiar but you had to ask the owner to confirm it was a member of that breed? This dog is usually the result of gradual dilution of the traits that make its breed unique.

Pet quality dogs from quality breedings do not adhere as closely to the breed standard as their show quality siblings do. But, pet quality dogs from well-bred litters usually adhere more to the standard than a dog of the same breed produced by a backyard breeder. Quality-bred pet puppies enjoy good temperament and health, as do their show/breeding quality siblings. Out of a litter from breeding/show quality dogs, one or two show/breeding quality offspring are produced. Generally pet quality puppies outnumber the breeding/show potentials. It is a rare litter that results in all show quality dogs. Often, if a breeder makes the statement that the entire litter is show quality, it reflects wishful thinking on their part or kennel blindness. A breeder experienced in the Löwchen should be able to evaluate each puppy and determine prospective show/breeding quality Löwchen but sometimes their pick grows up to be pet quality. This is a disappointment but a serious breeder will eliminate the dog from the breeding program. There is no point in keeping a pet quality dog since that is generally what it may produce.

### **Health And Temperament**

Löwchen to be bred should be of sound temperament. Desirable is a sunny, happy disposition denoting confidence. A typical Löwchen is very intelligent. They should not be shy or bite when frightened. They should not be hyperactive or nervous. Also vital is the health history of the individual Löwchen to be bred.

### **Luxating Patella**

As in many small dogs, Luxating Patella is a problem. Veterinarians usually check for this disorder during annual check ups. Breeders can learn to check patellas since most veterinarians are willing to

explain how to do so. Be aware that if taught incorrectly, one can actually damage the patella. They can be pushed or manipulated too forcibly causing damage to the ligament. Löwchen can get luxating patella from injury, so it is important to determine if a dog has normal patella at eight weeks old. If an eight-week old puppy has a poor patella, it is best to eliminate it from a breeding program.

It is thought that there are varying causes of Patella luxation. In one inherited form the groove of the bone that the Patella ligament rests on is too shallow to accommodate the ligament and another is where the bone is correct, but the ligament is weak and easily stretched. The second form is not always evident at a young age and so it is best that one rechecks the dog between 2-3 years of age to be certain the patella is healthy. While Luxating Patella can be inherited, there are instances where a ligament is injured, such as a sport injury to an athlete. When this happens to one dog in a bloodline, that is safely attributable to injury, but if several members of a family have patellas that luxate after they are grown, then it is likely the cause is genetic, and those dogs should be carefully bred from.

The use of dogs with mild forms of Luxating Patella is allowed, but expert breeders should only do this. When using these dogs in a breeding program, they should be as perfect as possible in other ways to justify their use. But, once used, the get must be stringently chosen. To keep a dog from succeeding generations, especially the second generation, if it has Patella luxation, is not warranted, no matter how perfect the dog in all other ways. The idea is to breed away from the Patella luxation, while keeping the affected dog's good qualities. If one does use an affected dog, and keeps succeeding generations of get, one must stringently select for many generations against Patella luxation. One must also be aware that it can, in all likelihood, surface periodically in succeeding generations. Breed from an affected dog only if you are able and willing to be ruthless in your selection process when selecting puppies from succeeding generations. This opens the question of do you sell a show quality animal with normal patellas that was produced by an affected parent? This is a

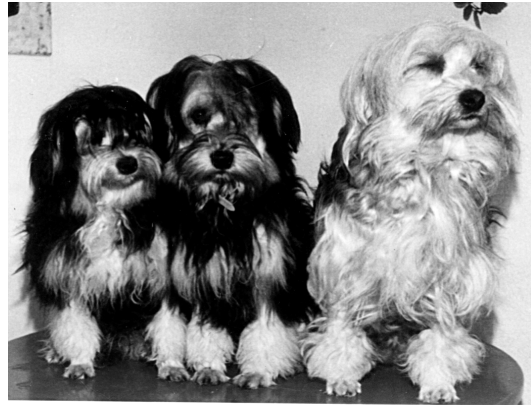
question only you can decide, but if you do, the best policy is to be honest with your buyer so that they can make correct breeding decisions when they begin to breed their dog.

### **Cataracts And Progressive Retinal Atrophy**

Two other serious health problems afflicting the breed are Cataracts and Progressive Retinal Atrophy, known as PRA. Löwchen to be used for breeding should be screened by a board certified veterinary ophthalmologist. Some breeders will send the results in to CERF and receive a registration number. This number proves for a year after issue, that the dog is clear of eye problems. CERF is an American registry for eye problems and research that requires yearly checkups to recertify the dog. While registering a dog with CERF is not necessary, having the dog examined yearly is, since some problems do not always surface early in a dog's life. Any dogs used for breeding should be inspected and their owners should have proof of these examinations available.

While one commonly associates cataracts with old dogs, they can occur in young dogs. Löwchen have been diagnosed with juvenile cataracts. Those that are affected with juvenile cataracts should not be bred. There are varying causes for some cataracts including age, trauma, disease, diabetes and genes. Ophthalmologists encourage elimination of dogs from breeding programs if they have cataracts at a young age, which are usually determined to be juvenile cataracts.

The bare eye does not diagnose PRA. A veterinary ophthalmologist who examines the eye after the pupil has been dilated determines PRA. Any dogs diagnosed with possible PRA by their clinical veterinarian should have their diagnosis confirmed by a certified veterinarian of ophthalmology. Many breeders have their dogs' eyes checked at eye clinics put on annually by local dog clubs as fundraisers. These clinics hire certified ophthalmologists to examine eyes. This is an affordable way to



Mother Bienchen von den Drei Löwchen and her offspring Alexander von Livland and Alexa von Livland.

have dogs' eyes examined. Be sure to determine if the veterinarian is a certified ophthalmologist.

During the 1980s, the Löwchen Club of America began a study by hiring a geneticist, Dr. Bell. The club's intent was to try to track the transmission of PRA. This study was discontinued after one year. With booming modern technology, one of the more promising possibilities in determining which dogs carry or are afflicted by PRA is DNA testing. DNA testing will be possible when the Löwchen DNA code sequence is unraveled, revealing where the PRA gene is located. Once this is determined, a simple blood test will reveal if a Löwchen is PRA affected, a carrier or clear. This can be performed on very young puppies, eliminating those affected before they are ever bred. It is safe to say that all Löwchen should be considered carriers until definitive results from a worldwide study are determined. There is no such study in place at this time. Without DNA testing, the pattern of transmission will be slow to be revealed. Many more Löwchen will need to be born before a transmission pattern is accurately identified. Until then, all breeders should screen their dogs and eliminate any dogs that are PRA affected. Be aware that there are those who assume a dog is not a carrier if it and its parents are certified clear of PRA. This is a dangerous assumption since the pattern of transmission has not yet been established.

Some dogs will be labeled PRA suspicious during an examination. This does not mean that the dog actually has PRA, or

ever will. Until the Löwchen eye structure is fully understood by veterinarians, any eye that is not completely normal by basic standards is labeled PRA suspicious. Sometimes the problem is as simple as a discoloration behind the retina. There may not be any actual degeneration of the retina, despite the label of suspicious. The reason a dog is considered suspicious is that some problems, while themselves are not PRA, can be precursors of PRA. All dogs labeled PRA suspicious need not be automatically be removed from a breeding program. This should be discussed with the examining veterinarian. In most cases he will recommend that the dog have an ERG. ERGs are examinations usually performed at university veterinary clinics. The equipment needed is too expensive for most veterinary hospitals. The dog must be sedated for the exam, which will reveal with certainty if the dog has PRA.

#### **Other Health Issues**

There are other problems that are slowly coming to the surface. While at this time they are rare, breeders should be aware of and screen against them whenever possible. Vitreous degeneration and Distachiasis have been diagnosed in Löwchen. Skin problems are not common in the breed as a rule. There have been several cases of hip dysplasia diagnosed. Deafness can occur in puppies but is rare.

There are also health issues that exist in the breed but are not determined at this time to have genetic causes. Some Löwchen have been diagnosed with cancer, liver or kidney disease as well as with heart problems. There has been a case of Addison's disease diagnosed. Deafness has occurred with some irregularity, but it is not unknown in the breed. There have also been some cases of epilepsy. Fortunately these problems are infrequent and with the continued diligence on the part of all breeders they will remain so.

#### **The Pedigree**

The pedigree is a tool used to tell which dogs contribute to the genetic makeup of a dog. Use the pedigree to determine which dogs you need to research in order to learn what they looked like and if possible,

their temperament and health record. Pedigrees show if a Löwchen is linebred, inbred or outcrossed, which will help in selecting a mate. Try to not be impressed by the prefix 'Champion.' While champion denotes a dog of quality, it does not tell what actual qualities the dog possessed. Do not base a breeding program solely on how many champions are listed in the pedigree. Base it on the individual qualities each dog possessed.

#### **LineBreeding**

This form of breeding is used often. It is a fairly reliable technique for beginners starting their breeding program. Linebreeding is breeding two dogs belonging to the same family or bloodline, descending from the same ancestors. Of the various combinations used are: aunt to nephew, niece to uncle, grandson to grandmother, grandfather to granddaughter, cousin to cousin and various other more distant combinations. In general, there are common ancestors in the pedigrees of both dogs being mated. This technique is easy to understand and best to work with until one has built up experience with the breed and its bloodlines.

#### **InBreeding**

In-breeding is breeding close relatives together such as a father to daughter or brother to sister breeding. Only experienced Löwchen breeders should undertake in-breeding. The purpose of in-breeding is to preserve certain traits by tightening up bloodlines. Tightening up bloodlines means having as many common ancestors as possible. The paired dogs should possess common desirable traits and those desirable traits must outweigh the bad traits. You should only use this breeding technique if you are very knowledgeable about the ancestors in the pedigree. A popular saying among breeders about inbreeding results is "You never know what you will get, they (the puppies) will be incredibly good or incredibly bad. There is no middle line here."

#### **Out-Crossing**

Out-crossing is the breeding of dogs with no common ancestors. This technique is used to bring fresh blood into a bloodline. One may seek new blood to improve what a

bloodline lacks. When breeding the offspring of these crossings, it is best to not to cross out again, but go back into either side of the bloodlines. Out-crossing again will certainly dilute a gene pool, possibly to the point that one will not be able to predict the outcome of successive breedings or explain the origin of certain traits. Interestingly enough, there are some breeders who strongly advocate only conducting out-cross breedings. They maintain that the gene pool is less likely to produce genetic defects.

### **The Brood Bitch**

A quality brood bitch is vital to a breeding program. When acquiring a breeding quality bitch, take as much time as necessary to find her. If beginning a foundation for your kennel, buy bitches from top-producing bloodlines that are well established. They should be sound and free of hereditary problems. If someone offers a "steal" of a deal on a bitch, be careful! Usually quality dictates price, but not necessarily. Be sure to know the breed as thoroughly as possible, since many beginners have gotten poor quality dogs at top quality prices. Another option to consider is to try to acquire older bitches that have produced quality offspring.

Quality breeders usually require a contract. Terms should include guarantees covering conformation, health and temperament. Should problems arise, there should be recourse from the breeder. Make sure the contract spells out what will be done, should there be need for the guarantee. While a breeder must live up to their contractual obligations, you do too.

It is possible that fertility problems exist in the breed. They may run in certain bloodlines but a pattern has not yet been established. If a bitch has trouble conceiving,



Matings should be supervised to prevent injury to either the male or female. Photo Gini Denninger

debate very carefully if this is a trait to pass on to future generations. If the problem is not easily resolved without consulting fertility experts, probably the bloodline should end right there. The Löwchen is an extremely fertile breed, and will only stay that way if breeders do not make exceptions here and there concerning bitches that have difficulty producing get. If, after heroic measures are taken, get is produced, they or their future offspring may multiply these problems. Some of the problems encountered when bitches do not conceive have been hormonal as well as constricted or obstructed birth canals.

Avoid basing your bloodlines on bitches that must have caesareans. Löwchen are generally easy whelpers. While a caesarian is understandable in litters of one, where a puppy may have grown too large to pass or there was an obstructed delivery, bitches that need caesarians due to other factors should be taken out of the breeding program. Keeping bitches that must have caesareans in a breeding program is to invite problems in the future. Should breeders continue using these bitches, eventually the breed could become dependent on veterinarian assistance to deliver puppies. This is not a desirable outcome.

Löwchen bitches can be first bred between 1.5 to 2.5 years of age. They should be in top health and up to date on their vaccinations and have been examined against the genetic problems of the breed. Some breeders will give a booster vaccination prior



Breeding for certain colors can be difficult. Even two dark colored parents can produce crème puppies. Photo Felizitas Dylla

to a bitch coming into season. The idea is that this boosts the bitch's titer count and this raised titer will be passed on to her puppies, raising their immune systems.

#### **Choice Of Stud Dog**

The choice of stud should be made prior to a bitch coming into season. There is nothing a stud dog owner resents more than a stranger calling them on the phone with the news that their female is ready to be bred that day. Could they breed their girl to the stud dog? Most often, scrupulous stud dog owners turn down these last minute callers. Good breeding requires planning. To choose a stud dog, attend shows and examine dogs that might be suitable with your bitch. Ask for pedigrees to determine what type of breeding, such as outcrossing or linebreeding would occur using a particular dog. Determine several stud dogs' strong and weak points. How do they compare to the bitch's strengths and weaknesses? If both the prospective sire and dam carry the same problems, It's wise t not to do that breeding combination and to keep looking for the right stud. Ideally, the dogs should compliment each other; strong in the area the other is weak. Be aware of what traits pass on easier or less frequently than others. It's best not to use a dog that carries the same faults as the bitch since they are most likely to be heavily stamped into the genes of the prospective puppies and will be harder to get rid of in future generations. Of course there is no such thing as the perfect dog as each carries faults.

The important thing is not to double up on serious faults. Doubling up on minor faults is preferable to doubling up on serious faults. Planned breeding is the hope of setting into a gene pool the genes with which one wants to work. Weigh and balance traits and be aware that no matter how good a breeding may seem, it could be a disaster, producing nothing you want to keep.

The grandparents of potential puppies should also be considered since they contribute heavily to their grandpuppies phenotype. Often the offspring resemble their grandparents more than their parents.

When selecting the stud dog, try not be impressed by his titles or wins. So many novice breeders and a few who should know better, rush their bitches to the latest top winning dog, regardless of whether the pedigrees and dogs' phenotypes compliment each other. If a dog is sensational, consider breeding to his sire since the chance of replicating those traits you admire is stronger coming from the original source. Many who breed to a current 'top dog' are disappointed when he does not reproduce himself. Remember, no matter how well a stud produces, the bitch is also involved and will contribute equally to the puppies' genetic makeup. One of the two parents could possess dominant genes and will influence type and quality, overriding its partner's contribution.

As an aid in deciding which stud dog to use, take a look at offspring already produced by him. Did sought-after traits come out in his puppies? If not, why not? Speak with breeders who have used the dog and ask what they think the dog gave their bloodlines. But remember when seeking the opinions of other breeders take what they say with a grain of salt, especially if they themselves have stud dogs available at public stud. If you have determined that a stud dog has been used several times but not produced any puppies of note, continue looking at other dogs since it is unlikely this dog will produce any better with your bitch. This is, of course, a decision that should be made after examining the pedigrees of the bitches the dog was bred to and how they relate to the bitch in question. If there was no commonality between those bitches and yours, then there is still a possibility the

breeding will work. In these situations, knowledge of the breed and its bloodlines will help in making the right decision.

When you have decided on the stud dog you must discuss terms with the owner. Find out what the stud fee will be. It might be either cash or a puppy resulting from the breeding. Find out what requirements the stud dog owner has before accepting a bitch for breeding. They may require health certificates, brucellosis tests and proof of screening against eye problems. You should ask the same of the stud dog owner. The brucellosis test is required to ensure that this sexually transmitted disease is not transmitted. Brucellosis can cause the abortion of a litter and infertility in bitches and dogs. Breeders should be careful not to introduce this into their kennel since a complete loss of their bloodlines can ensue.

Expect the stud dog owner to make a careful examination of your bitch's pedigree. They are looking at it to determine if there is anything in your bitch's genetic makeup that would make the breeding between the stud dog and bitch unadvisable. They should know what bloodlines are most successful with their stud and would be wise to tell the owner of the bitch if they thought the breeding would not produce satisfactory results. Remember, owners of the bitch usually blame stud dogs if their litter does not turn out as hoped or genetic problems crop up. The stud dog owner is trying to prevent these things and should turn down a bitch for breeding to their male if they see possible problems. If a stud dog owner turns the bitch down for breeding, they should be willing to give a reason for not making their male available. Unfortunately, not all stud owners are willing to do so.

### **Payment**

Ask the stud dog owner to provide a written contract that outlines what is provided by the stud dog owner and any requirements expected from the owner of the bitch. Also be sure that any verbal guarantees



Desiree vom Burgwald six weeks pregnant. Photo Felizitas Dylla.

mentioned by the stud dog owner are listed in the contract.

If the agreement for payment for stud service is a puppy instead of cash, don't agree to give first pick if this litter is crucial for your bloodline. Second pick is fair. The whole idea of breeding to a particular dog is to get the best possible quality puppy. If first pick went to the stud dog owner, it may be that all efforts and risks are for nothing. After all, the owner of the brood bitch risks more by having a litter than the owner of the stud dog. When is the last time you have heard of a stud dog dying during the pregnancy or birth process?

A stud fee is usually based on the going price of a pet quality puppy. If the dog is not well known or established as a stud dog, one might be lucky to pay only the price of a pet quality puppy. If the dog is producing well, or is an import offering fresh bloodlines, expect to pay top price for his services.

Once you agree on the breeding and the stud fee, find out what the fee covers. Besides the actual fee for the breeding, the stud dog owner may ask for board and other expenses involved in the breeding. Be sure you know what any additional charges may be prior to agreeing to use a stud dog.

Usually if one live puppy is born, this is considered a litter and the stud dog's service is rendered and discharged. Sometimes, if a puppy back is the agreement and if only one is born or if no litter results, an agreement or offer to return for a second breeding to the stud dog is extended. If the agreement was a puppy as payment for the stud service, determine in writing, what is to

take place if one puppy results. If the bitch owner keeps the puppy then the breeding is done again, with the stud dog owner getting first pick of the second litter, or the reverse.

In the case of cash as a stud fee, if nothing results from a repeat breeding, the stud dog owner has discharged their service and keeps the stud fee if there was cash involved. While this may not seem fair, you have to understand you are paying for the services of the stud dog and the owner's time and effort. There are usually no guarantees of a live litter after two attempts. If a bitch has not impregnated after the first attempt, the stud dog owner usually provides in their contract that the bitch may be brought back for a second attempt during her next season. If no litter results, the owner and stud dog have earned the stud fee and are under no obligation to return it. If the bitch is not impregnated from the second breeding, the stud dog owner may suggest having the bitch examined by a veterinarian experienced in determining reproductive problems. If the stud dog were older, it would not be unreasonable to ask the stud dog owner to have a semen check done

prior to the breeding to forestall conflict.

Whatever agreements are made, it is important that they be documented and signed by both parties before anything takes place. This prevents hard feelings should things go awry.

### **The Breeding**

Once the agreement is made, you need to advise the stud dog owner when you expect the bitch to come into season. Before the actual breeding takes place you have more decisions to be made.

If the stud dog is not close by, the decision must be made to ship or drive the bitch to the stud dog. Many breeders ship bitches. The airlines must be contacted to make arrangements. The airlines will advise what is required prior to shipping. Your bitch should be crate trained since it's cruel to expect her to under go extra stress in having to become accustomed to a crate in addition to being shipped. It has become increasingly difficult to ship dogs due to new airline and FAA rules in the United States. In case of

severe temperature, hot or cold, the airlines may refuse to ship. Airlines are not willing to accept responsibility in extreme conditions and will not accept dogs for shipping if there is a higher risk to shipping safely.

The bitch should be shipped using the most direct route possible. Avoid shipping on weekends since airline cargo office can be closed or open limited hours. Should there be a shipping problem, it could be difficult to resolve.

While a stud dog owner usually houses bitches in for breeding, not all offer this service. If the stud dog owner does not have proper facilities for housing bitches in for breeding, arrangements are usually made that the bitch be boarded at a local veterinary hospital or boarding kennel. There may be a pickup and delivery fee if the bitch is shipped, especially if the airport is not close by. Any expenses incurred while the bitch is with the stud dog owner are usually the bitch owner's responsibility.

If at all possible, the owner of the bitch should personally deliver her to the stud dog to be assured of the bitch arriving in good condition. The owner will also be a witness to the breeding and be satisfied it went well. If the owner does bring the bitch for breeding there is an important rule that should be followed. Don't bring along the entire family, since doing so may make the breeding difficult. An audience may be too distracting for the male or bitch. The stud dog owner may protest having too many people around to witness the breeding for this reason.

When the bitch comes into season, her vulva will start to swell. Sometimes there is a change in her personality. A colored discharge may appear in a few days. At this time the stud dog owner should be contacted to make final arrangements. If the bitch does not have a discharge, there is no reason to be alarmed since some Löwchen females are very fastidious and will keep themselves clean.

Today there are many methods that can help to determine the optimum time to breed a bitch. The most common is the simple slide method. A swab is taken of the bitch's vagina and smeared on a slide. It is stained and viewed under a microscope. The determination of where the female is in her



cycle is made based on the cornification of the cells. There are now progesterone tests available as well. They pinpoint the optimum time for conceiving. In most cases, the more advanced tests are not necessary unless a bitch has had difficulty in conceiving. These tests are useful then in identifying the right time to attempt breeding.

When the bitch is ready to be bred she will show signs. The easiest sign to spot is when she is flagging. The term "flagging" describes the female holding her tail high and tight against her body exposing her genitals. This is an indication that she is receptive to being bred. Some females will even back up to a male indicating their willingness to be bred.

Most likely the male is an experienced stud dog when he is made available for public stud. Try to not breed a maiden bitch to an inexperienced male on her first breeding. It's awkward and frustrating when both dogs are not sure what to do and this can be time consuming, unproductive and dangerous. A maiden bitch can make the experience so miserable that the stud dog might not be interested in breeding in the future.

When the right time has come for the breeding, the stud dog owner will usually supervise the actual breeding. Breedings should be supervised. Supervised breedings are especially important with maiden bitches or novice stud dogs. They may not know what is going on and become frightened. Sometimes unsupervised breedings result in injuries. Supervised breedings also allow stud dog owners to determine if a tie was achieved. If there was difficulty in achieving a tie, the stud dog owner may suggest artificial insemination.

When the bitch is presented to the dog for breeding, the stud dog owner might ask that she be muzzled to prevent her from turning and biting the male. Biting by the bitch has occurred, sometimes with dire results such as the stud dog losing his eye.



Clipping the bitch before the birth will make maintaining her much easier after puppies are born. Some bitches blow more of their coats than others. In these cases clipping the bitch is highly suggested so that the coat is able to grow back in evenly. Bitches lose coat due to hormonal changes. Ch. Ashford's Mistico Tiffany. Photo Gini Denninger

Don't argue with the owner as they are merely trying to protect the dog. Too many things can go wrong, causing either dog or bitch to be injured and souring them against future breedings. Once the breeding is completed, the bitch's rear should be held higher than her chest so that the semen runs into her. This should be done for a few minutes after the tie is completed. Then the bitch should be placed into a crate to settle down for a rest, with water.

Once the tie is completed that is usually all that is necessary. Further breedings are not required but to ensure a pregnancy, a second breeding is usually done the following day or the day after. Some breeders advocate breeding a bitch three times over a period of six days. It's better to spread the breeding period over four days, since there is a possibility of puppies born six days apart in development. If this happens usually the younger puppies are born too undeveloped to survive. This is a heart-breaking scenario.

After two ties are completed, all that is left to do is wait. The bitch should be well fed and exercised. If the bitch's owner wants to determine a pregnancy prior to being able to see it, she may be palpated. A veterinarian or experienced breeder who knows how to palpate can inspect the bitch on days they feel are optimum for detection. There are also



New Born still connected to his mother by the umbilical cord. The birth sac is already removed. Photo Gini Denninger

pregnancy tests available for dogs that are offered by veterinarians.

### **The Pregnant Bitch**

Once the bitch is home after being bred, she should be treated as usual. There is no need to increase her food or to start adding extra supplements. In fact, extra supplements may cause the puppies to be larger than they should be, making the birth more difficult. Do not cut down on her exercise. Her normal routine should be followed. In the last three weeks of her pregnancy, she could be switched to a quality puppy chow. This will be sufficient to supply the necessary nutrients she will need to prepare for the birth of the puppies. In the later part of her pregnancy, when she begins to show, she should be allowed to eat as much as she likes. Food should be left out all day or night since the bitch may only be able to eat small amounts at a time. She should not be allowed to get out of shape or fat. This can make her delivery more difficult. Towards the end of her pregnancy she may need to be walked if she does not want to do anything and will need to be encouraged to be active. The Löwchen females seem to thrive when pregnant and go through their pregnancies with ease.

### **Preparing For Delivery**

You will need to prepare for the delivery by determining where you expect

your bitch to whelp her puppies. Most breeders use a whelping box with a rail running along side the bottom about 2 inches from the floor. The rail is to ensure that a puppy will not become crushed against the wall of the whelping box. Let the bitch become acquainted with the new sleeping arrangement at least a week before the babies are due. The box should be lined with newspaper, not towels or sheets since a puppy could become entangled and suffocate should the mother keep rearranging the bedding. Another advantage of using newspaper is that the box is easily cleaned. Several stacks of newspaper should be on hand prior to delivery.

A week before the due date, items should be gathered that may be needed during the birth. They are hand towels, several pairs of Kelly clamps, heating pad, towels, coat weight thread, iodine, scissors and a box large enough to hold a heating pad. Preparations should be finalized at least one week prior to the due date to avoid scurrying around looking for items needed, as the bitch begins labor.

### **Early Whelping Stages**

Löwchen bitches are not prima donnas when it comes to having babies. If anything they are the original "earth mothers". Löwchen usually whelp easily, resulting in few caesarian sections. While their ease of whelping is welcome news to their owners, one problem is that they often do not exhibit signs of labor until shortly before birth. One of my bitches showed no signs of being in labor, walked into her crate, and a few minutes later I heard a small cry. Imagine my surprise on discovering her newborn! Not to fear, most bitches follow the normal birthing patterns described in dog breeding books. The day or night before the puppies are due the bitch may become restless. She will seem uncomfortable and unable to settle down. She may cry if her owner leaves her side. While some Löwchen bitches refuse food, many continue eating until just before birth, especially if offered special tidbits they normally don't get. The bitch may decide that the whelping box provided is not to her liking. She should be watched closely to prevent the litter being born in a laundry basket or closet. The bitch

may need to go out to relieve herself more frequently. She should be escorted out. A bitch in labor should not be left alone outside since she may whelp a puppy that could be left outside accidentally. This would be more likely to happen with a novice bitch since she may be unsure of what is happening and may mistake labor for the urge to relieve herself.

A good sign the bitch is getting ready to whelp is when she begins to rearrange or tear up the newspaper in her box. After a flurry of activity she may become more settled, but still act uncomfortable. She will begin panting and occasionally turn around and lie down again. She should be watched closely. If she is clipped down, her contractions can be visible during the final stages. Some bitches begin shivering as they near delivery. Try to have the room quiet, with few spectators or commotion in the background. This is a time when the bitch needs to be able to concentrate on her newborns, not become stressed. Distractions may be perceived as threats by the bitch. If she feels worried or threatened, she may not welcome your help during delivery, even though normally you are her best friend.

### **Delivering Puppies**

As contractions begin to expel a puppy, the bitch will turn towards her rear and begin vigorously licking her vulva. Look closely and you will see a puppy still in its birth sack, protruding. The puppy may slide back in between contractions until the final contraction, when it is expelled. At this point you have several options, leave the bitch to do what comes naturally or to intervene. I personally favor breaking open the birth sack as fast as possible so the puppy does not drown. At the same time do not allow the sack and afterbirth to slide back into the bitch. A Kelly clamp attached to them can prevent this. Do not forcibly pull them out, since they may still be attached to the uterine wall. Pulling may rupture blood vessels;



Lövchen mothers are very capable of taking care of their puppies after birth. Lövchen puppies are larger than one would expect. This was a litter of five; yet notice how large the puppy is In the foreground. Photo Gini Denninger

which could cause serious complications from excessive bleeding, even cause the death of the bitch.

The bitch will be eager to lick the puppy and may become frantic if not allowed to do this. Quickly sever the cord. There are several ways to do this. One is to allow the mother to bite the cord, pinching tightly with fingernails to cut off blood flow. Once the cord is shredded it usually does not bleed. If it does, take thread and very tightly tie it at the end of the cord. Anoint the cord with iodine. Another process for removing the cord is to place a Kelly clamp about one inch from the puppy's stomach. Put the puppy with the mother to get acquainted. After a few minutes cut the cord on the Kelly clamp side away from the puppy and tie it off. Anoint it with iodine to prevent infection.

If the puppy is not breathing or mewling, its air passage may need to be cleared. Wrap the puppy in a towel, cupping its head and neck in your fingers, the body in your palm. With steady speed, raise the



Puppies instinctively know to begin nursing. If a puppy does not begin nursing it is possible there is a problem and it needs to be tended to by the breeder. Puppies should nurse shortly after birth. Mother's milk is especially important in the first 24 hours since it contains antibodies necessary to the puppy's immune system. Photo Gini Denninger

puppy up and quickly but smoothly, move your arms in a flinging motion downward. Do not let go of the puppy! It is very important that its head and neck are secure. Should control be lost, the puppy could be killed. Its head must be supported securely. If not its neck could snap, leading to instant or a lingering death. The flinging motion will dislodge any mucus blocking the puppy's air passage. Once the air passage is cleared, the puppy should begin to stir. If not rub the puppy briskly and repeat the motions. Once the puppy is moving and breathing, place it with its mother. The puppy should begin to seek a nipple and nurse. If the bitch starts to give birth again, place the newborn puppy in a box on a heating pad that has been covered with a towel.

### **Problem Whelping**

Once the birth process begins it usually progresses quickly with L wchen uterine horn is emptied and the puppies in the other are beginning their way down. Should the bitch stop contracting or act distressed in any way, contact the veterinarian immediately. Prior to the due date, let your veterinarian know you are expecting the litter. Make arrangements in case you need your veterinarian's assistance. If your regular veterinarian refers all

afterhour calls to a local emergency clinic, you might try making special arrangements with him. Explain that you prefer to work with him if you have an emergency. He may not be willing to be available. If so, consider finding a veterinarian that works with breeders and is available in emergencies. It can be hard to find a veterinarian who understands serious dog breeders and their special needs.

If the puppy is a breech birth, when feet appear first, the breeder may need to assist. As feet appear, try to grasp them with a thin washcloth, drawing the puppy out of the birth canal with each contraction. Do not pull too vigorously or hard as the puppy's legs can separate from the hip or the bitch may be injured. Do not pull the puppy straight out. Instead, draw it toward the mother's head to follow the natural curve of the birth canal. As soon as the puppy is out, quickly clear the air passage since the puppy may have lost precious time and will need air as fast as possible.

If a puppy does not come around, begin lifesaving measures. Clear the mouth of liquids and rub the puppy's chest vigorously. Do not be too gentle since the puppy's system needs to be shocked to life. Don't press so hard that the puppy will be injured. There is a fine line of applied pressure. If the puppy does not respond, continue rubbing along with the flinging motion described above for at least fifteen minutes. Be sure to have a clock visible to check the time spent trying to revive a puppy. When trying to revive a puppy, time will seem longer than it actually is and you may give up prematurely.

### **Birthing Aftercare**

Give the afterbirths to the bitch as this will give her the extra nutrients she needs since the birth process was strenuous. Some breeders will not offer or will limit the number of afterbirths, maintaining the bitch will develop a runny stool. I have not had this happen with any of my bitches that devoured all the afterbirths. Additionally, once all the puppies are born, offer the bitch cottage cheese and a little canned dog food. Follow this up with a small portion of her regular food mixed with canned food and cottage cheese, and leave this with her in the

whelping box. Do not leave a water dish in the box as a puppy may somehow accidentally end up in it and drown. Put the water out of the whelping box, but where the bitch can get to it when she wants.

Once the whelping is complete, put the bitch with her puppies in a crate, with the heating pad temperature turned to low. Quickly clean the whelping box, laying down fresh papers. Do not layer the box with towels or sheets as a puppy can become entangled and suffocate should the bitch decide to rearrange the whelping box. Return the bitch and her litter to the box. Now is time to leave her alone with her new babies. Do not be insulted if she does not seem to want you once she returns to the whelping box. Give the bitch time with the babies without picking them up every few minutes to examine them since she may become anxious. I usually make a quick examination of the puppies after their birth and do not touch them again for a few hours or until the mother is outside, to give her an adjustment period.

Most breeders make use of either a heating pad or heat lamp to ensure the puppies stay warm since their body temperature is not regulated for a few days after birth. They can quickly become chilled. Using a heating pad is the safer choice of the two. Using a heating pad will allow the puppies to regulate how warm they want to be by allowing them to move to the sides or off the pad as opposed to the heat lamp, which will warm the entire whelping box. There is also the risk that the heat lamp may not be sufficiently secured and can fall into the whelping box injuring or killing the puppies by burning them or setting the box afire.

#### **Pitocin Shot**

After the whelping is finished, some breeders automatically bring their bitches to the veterinarian to be examined and receive a pituitrin shot. Known by its slang term among breeders as the "Pit Shot," this shot is given to induce uterine contractions to expel any after births that may still be in the womb. To prevent the need for the shot for this reason, try to count the afterbirths as the puppies are born. This is to prevent possible infection that could cost the bitch's life from

retained afterbirth. Another reason to use pitocin is to expel a puppy that may still be lodged in the uterus. If you do not plan to automatically give a pit shot to your bitch, carefully examine her to determine if all the puppies are born. If you feel a rounded lump that may or may not be moving, but the bitch acts as if she is finished whelping, this warrants a visit to the veterinarian.

#### **Maintaining The Bitch And Her Litter**

Löwchen bitches are easy to maintain while nursing their babies. Just ensure that the bitch has as much food as she wants or needs. Some females need twice as much as they normally eat. The first few days the bitch may be so entranced with her puppies, that she is not interested in food.



Puppies automatically huddle together to preserve warmth. It is very important to keep puppies warm, especially newborns. Newborns are not able to regulate their temperatures until after the first 24 hours. Photo Gini Denninger

You must entice her. Mix in goodies such as cottage cheese, cooked hamburger meat, canned dog food or any treats she loves. Water should be available to her all the time.

If she is not fed or watered enough, her milk could dry up.

### **Weighing The Puppies**

Many breeders weigh their puppies at birth and keep a weight chart until the puppies are three to eight weeks old. Until you are very familiar with how Löwchen puppies develop, weighing them is a good practice to follow, especially if you are new to Löwchen or are a novice breeder. You will be able to identify individual puppies that are struggling and take action. Another advantage to maintaining a weight chart is that their weights are handy when you are ready to worm the puppies. If new to breeding, see if your breeder can provide you with weights of puppies from the same bloodlines as your bitch, to be a guide to you.

### **Tube Feeding**

The mother's milk usually lets down either during the whelping or shortly after. If there is no milk or not enough of it, you will have to tube feed. Have your veterinarian show you how to do this. The best tube to use is a red rubber intubation or tracheal tube that your veterinarian uses during surgery to bring air and gases to the lungs. It is very soft and flexible with openings at the bottom that allow formula to flow. To begin feeding, hold the puppy. Place the tube alongside it, measuring it from mouth to stomach. Mark the tube at the puppy's mouth. This will help you gauge if you are far enough into the stomach. Draw warmed formula (best to use a substitution formulated for puppies) into a syringe, attach the tube, and push the formula through to the end of the rubber tube. This ensures that there is no air pumped into the puppy's stomach. Place the tube into the puppy's mouth. The puppy usually starts to swallow as the tube slides to the back of the mouth, allowing the tube to be swallowed. If the tube refuses to go to the marked portion do not force it. Remove it and start again, since the tube may have gone into the lungs. A sign that this has occurred is that the puppy may begin to gag. The lungs are a shorter distance from the mouth. Once the tube is close to or on the mark, push the formula out gently. Watch the stomach. As it begins to round out, stop. Do not fill the stomach to bursting. You will need to tube

feed several times a day according to the formula directions. Do not make up your own formula, since the puppy may not get the balanced diet it needs to thrive.

While tube feeding is initially scarier, it is actually safer than nursing Löwchen babies with a bottle. Too many puppies have drowned nursing on a bottle, since they were too weak or unable to nurse and liquids were forced into the mouth too quickly or too much to swallow, ending up in the lungs and drowning the puppy. When the puppy is stronger, it can begin nursing, although by then you may be accustomed to tube feeding and continue to do so until the puppy is successfully weaned to puppy gruel.

### **Failure To Thrive**

There are times when a puppy does not thrive, and it eventually dies. This is tragic and sad, but this does occur when breeding dogs. It can be difficult to deal with, especially if litters are infrequent. It is very frustrating to watch a puppy slowly die and you are not able to do anything about it. Making the decision of what to do in these cases is hard.

Sometimes a mother will push a puppy away repeatedly. To the human eye there does not seem to be anything wrong with the puppy. It is difficult to stand by and let nature take its course. If the breeder steps in they may be able to nurse the puppy by tube feeding it, and hope it survives. If it is dehydrated, they can infuse it with intravenous fluids. Sometimes they take the puppy to a vet who may prescribe antibiotics in the hopes of saving the puppy. Often these attempts fail, but it is worth the try in the off chance a puppy pulls through.

If, after all the work of trying to save a puppy, it become apparent that the puppy is in pain, the time to make a decision has come, whether to put the puppy down. If the decision is made to kill the puppy, take



A Löwchen puppy that has recently opened its eyes. It's normal that both eyes do not open simultaneously. Photo Alice Bixler

it to the veterinarian to be put to sleep. This is far kinder than the home remedy of wrapping it in a towel and putting it in the freezer. The idea with the freezer method is that the puppy merely falls asleep and eventually dies. This is not a kind way to kill a puppy. There is pain involved with this method, since often the puppy's extremities freeze first, causing great pain. Imagine standing in the cold with no gloves or shoes on. Your feet and hands begin to hurt. It is not until much later that you would be tired enough to slip away in sleep. Do what you can to ease the puppy out if its life kindly if there is no other course.

There is the school of thought that if the mother pushes a puppy away it is best to allow it to die, since there is something wrong with it that she has sensed. Often in these cases, the puppy is half dead when the mother pushes it away, but not always. Letting go is difficult to do, unless the puppy is non-responsive. Letting it die is usually the kindest thing. The decision of whether you should have it put to sleep is yours. If the puppy were obviously suffering the kindest thing to do would be to help it leave this world.

### **Handling The Puppies**

Many breeders decide to impose a sort of quarantine on the bitch and her puppies. This is up to you. If the bitch has been properly vaccinated and all is well with the litter, there is no reason people cannot visit and at least peek in on the babies. It is up to you and your bitch if you want strangers to handle the puppies. Some bitches do not mind having their babies handled while others may become anxious

and worried. If yours is the anxious type, avoid stressing her. It is important that you handle the puppies regularly, starting a few days after birth. Puppies are more people orientated if they have continuous contact with people.

### **Puppy Stages**

#### **Two Weeks**

The puppies' eyes will be open or in the process of opening. They may need to have their toenails cut. The nails will be sharp and can irritate the bitch by scratching her teats. You can do this with the ordinary people nail clippers.

#### **Three Weeks**

The puppies will begin to try walking and start to be more aware of their surroundings. They may try to play with each other. Worm the puppies for the first time, using a wormer that eliminates hook and round worms. Follow the wormer or your veterinarian's directions for usage. worm. Do not use a wormer that requires abstinence from food for the day or even several hours since there are excellent wormers that can be given any time even if the dog has just eaten.

#### **Four Weeks**

At this point the puppies will be moving about still somewhat unsteadily. You should worm the puppies between four to five weeks of age. They are ready to eat puppy gruel now. Do not take the bitch away except for exercise and some time to herself. As the puppies get older the bitch will signal when to start the weaning process since she will want to spend less time with her babies and more time with her owners. Beginning the weaning process starts with offering puppy gruel and getting the puppies accustomed to eating. Do not wean the puppies completely at this age. They are not ready until a few weeks later. To do so now is cruel. Small dog puppies often need their mothers for longer periods of time than do their large breed counterparts.



Löwchen mothers often let their puppies nurse indefinitely. Löwchen puppies can be weaned between 6-7 weeks safely. They should never be weaned earlier than 6 weeks. Besides needing mothers sustenance, they need their mother's guidance in order to learn manners. Photo Felizitas Dylla.

#### Six Weeks

Time for the first vaccination. Every breeder and veterinarian has his or her own schedule for shots. This is the earliest that you should vaccinate. The puppies are playing aggressively. Now is a good time to start watching the puppies in order to evaluate their qualities. Now is also a good time to give first puppy baths.

#### Seven Weeks

Worm the puppies again. This time use a broad-spectrum wormer. You will need to buy this from your veterinarian since most broad-spectrum wormers are prescription medications. The veterinarian will also figure out the dosage for you. Most broad-spectrum wormers are administered over a three-day period.

#### Eight To Ten Weeks

The puppies are generally weaned and able to leave the pack. Now is the time to weed out the pet quality puppies. The show prospects are at their peak now. By ten weeks they may begin to go through awkward growing stages, making predicting the best puppy difficult for even the most experienced breeders. It would be a good idea to have the puppies examined by your veterinarian. If there are any problems, you should be aware of them before selling the puppies.

#### Feeding The Puppy After Weaning

Now that the puppy is fully weaned, food and water should be available all the time up to three months of age. After that time you can begin a feeding regime. Until a puppy is six months old, it should have twice daily feedings. Use a good quality puppy food until the puppy is six months old. If you want the dog to eat once a day, begin that schedule around or after six months.

#### Selling Your Puppies

This is one of the most important times in a puppy's life. They are depending on you to be properly placed in their prospective homes since they have no choice of where they end up. You should have made your litter application and have the paperwork back or at least underway. Have all puppies be examined by your veterinarian and given health certificates. By the time the puppies are eight weeks old, you should have written out the pedigrees and vaccination and worming records for each individual puppy.

To protect a puppy, it should be sold on contract even if it is going to a pet home. Contracts cover items pertaining to the dog's security, health and special arrangements that may be agreed upon between buyer and seller. You can put anything in a contract, as long as you specify cause and effects. In other words, what is agreed upon and what will take place if the agreement is not honored.

It is assumed by your act of producing puppies that you do want to stand behind them. You must be willing to take a puppy back in the future at any time, no matter what the dog's age. You should be concerned if the dog is given away or sold by those who acquired it from you. You should want to know where your puppies are. There is no worse phone call a breeder can get than one saying a dog from their kennel is in the local animal shelter. Besides being upsetting to the dog, this does not do wonders for your reputation as a reputable breeder. Cover this in your contract. If the dog is no longer wanted, you should specify what actions are to be taken.

Another detail that should be included in a contract is a health guarantee. Including a health guarantee is one way





Photos previous page: LCA CH. Destiny's Lady Tache, DC, ROM (above) bred by Liz Vargo. Her daughter Ch. Kismet's Eclipse Corona, a two time National Specialty winner, bred by Nadine Pelleschi. The quality of a breeder is reflected in the dogs they produce. The goal of all breeders is to continue bloodlines while improving on each generation. These two females are a wonderful example of a breeder's progress with their breeding program. Photo's Nadine Pelleschi.

quality breeders distinguish themselves from backyard breeders. Assuming you have screened your breeding dogs against hereditary problems, you should be willing to extend some sort of health guarantee.

All pets should be sold on spay/neuter contracts. There is no reason a pet quality dog should remain intact. Its very classification as a pet designates a puppy as not being breeding quality. The American Kennel Club as well as The Canadian Kennel club allow for designation of a puppy to have non-breeding papers. All pets should be sold with this non-breeding designation. The American Kennel Club allows for this designation to be lifted at a later date. If you determine the dog is show/breeding quality after all, this procedure can be set into motion. If there is uncertainty in regards to the dog's future quality, a clause can be written which makes provisions for the dog to be reviewed in the future and a determination be made as to its quality by its breeder or a person designated by the breeder. Should the dog be breeding/show quality, the owner and seller can refer to terms, which should be included in the original contract. This is not meant to be an opportunity for the seller to bargain unexpectedly for more money.

### **Co-Ownerships**

Co-Ownerships are generally reserved for show dogs. If the Löwchen is to be coowned, a contract should include where it will reside, who is responsible for what expenses such as food, veterinary care, show expenses and future breeding costs. In the case of male dogs, will any potential stud fees be split? With bitches, what will each partner derive out of her, who will whelp litters and who pays what costs.

You can cover anything in a contract. Some breeders have standard contracts that they use each time they sell a puppy while others write up a new contract each time they

sell a puppy. If you sell puppies with the same stipulations and guarantees every time, you can use the same contract. Show dog sales may require different contracts each time.

For more information on the basics of breeding, there are many reference books. Read as much as you can about breeding and genetics. Try to visit with other breeders, observing their litters and adult dogs. Remember, no matter how many years you have been involved in dogs, you will never know everything. Always be open to learning new things! In turn, you must be willing to teach others new to the Löwchen. Don't be stingy with the knowledge you have gained.