

Why do an Ultra Sound? By Linda Knilans

You don't have to do an Ultra Sound on your suspected pregnant bitch. I have been told that it is more accurate when trying to find out how many puppies to expect to do an x-ray sometime during the week before she is due.

So why bother driving to the vet and spending \$85 to get an Ultra Sound done? There are actually several good reasons. Ultra Sounds are usually done at 30 days; by then the embryonic sacs are the size of walnuts. The photo to the left is a cross



section of one horn showing 3 pups. So far my reproduction specialist, Greg Burns at Mesa Vet Clinic in Fort Collins has been right on when it comes to getting an early count of how many pups to expect. Since the anticipation of having puppies and hopefully a new show dog is so exciting, having an Ultra Sound helps with ones curiosity. Some reasons other than simple curiosity are a little more practical.

At 30 days, the embryos are developed enough to see the ratio of puppy to embryonic fluids in the sack. According to Dr. Burns, at 30 days, this should be about equal. If it is not, that pup could be in distress. If there is a problem, you may want to do further tests on your bitch, such as checking progesterone levels or doing either an oral or vaginal check for a bacterial infection.

Dogs handle pregnancy different than humans. If a human fetus is in distress the mother aborts the pregnancy. Dogs are built a little different. They are designed for multiple births and have two "horns" that the pups grow in. If the 3rd puppy up the horn is not viable the bitch can't push it out past the other pups so she either reabsorbs it or she stops providing fluids to it and the pup mummifies in the horn. If at 30 days an Ultra Sound shows 4 puppies but on whelping day your bitch only delivers one, you may want to take a look at the pregnancy to try to find the reason why you started with 4 fertilized eggs but only ending up with one viable pup.