

SO YOU ARE GOING TO BREED YOUR GREAT DANE

Dane Outreach takes the stand that the breeding of Great Danes should be left to those who are actively involved in the breed. This would include involvement in showing dogs in conformation and/or performance events and membership in clubs devoted to these activities. It is the strong recommendation of Dane Outreach that anyone who wishes to become involved in a breeding program volunteer six months of their time to a rescue program so they can fully understand the full scope of the rescue problem. Additionally, it is strongly suggested that anyone entering a breeding program do so only after they have found a qualified mentor willing to help and assist them along the way. There are more reasons why *not* to breed your dog than there are to. Please do not confuse love of your dog with love of the breed.

However, after saying all of that, we recognize that there are people who are still going to breed their Dane, no matter what we think! While we do not condone the casual breeding of pets, we feel it is important to provide this information so the resulting puppies will be as healthy as possible, and the purchasers will be equipped to properly care of a Great Dane.

Know About The Breed

Take some time to find out about the breed. Know what the colors are supposed to be, and what the health issues are. Potential purchasers are going to be looking to you for information-you need to be sure what you tell them is accurate. Two good sites to check are www.gdca.org and www.gininnie.com.

The Parents

Among the Dane fancy, it is generally accepted that Danes should not be bred before two years of age. Why? The first reason is two years is the age at which hips can be certified against hip dysplasia. The second is any Dane under two years is still a youngster. Breeding a year old bitch is like a 13 year old girl having a baby...sure, they can do it, but it's pretty rough on them. Their body is still growing, and then extra demands are made on it because of the pregnancy. Third, you want to wait until the dog is at least two to be sure no health problems crop up in young dogs.

The parents should be of obvious good health, and have good temperament. Dogs that are excessively shy, timid, or aggressive should not be bred. Why? These traits are passed on to the puppies. If you have issues with the temperament of your own dog, do not breed it. You do not want to have a reputation for breeding Great Danes that bite people.

You should do health testing on the adults you are breeding. While Great Danes are a wonderful breed, they have many, many health problems. As the concerned breeder of a litter of puppies, you want to do all you can to avoid problems. Health screenings generally done among the Dane fancy include x-ray hips against hip dysplasia and certifying with the OFA, doing a cardiac check and certifying, having eyes checked by a canine ophthalmologist and certified, and having the thyroid tested. Your purchasers will be glad that you've cared enough about the breed to do health screenings.

Be sure that the mother is current on all of her vaccines and wormings prior to breeding. It is imperative she be in excellent condition.

You should make sure your dog looks like a Great Dane. Even if you are just breeding for pets, you want the resulting puppies to look like the breed. If you breed two very mediocre Danes together, the resulting puppies will look even less like the breed. If that continues, the resulting dogs are so far removed from breed type it becomes questionable as to what breed they really are.

Make sure the parents do not have common faults. This may be hard to recognize if you are unfamiliar with conformation and structure, but is very, very important for producing sound, healthy puppies. Doubling up on some structural faults can cause crippled dogs that have to be euthanized. Two examples I have seen personally: Two parents who severely lacked in rear angulation. The resulting litter was so crippled in the rear from this fault they could not walk. Two parents who had improper dentition (undershot teeth/mouth). The resulting puppies had jaws and teeth so out of alignment they had to be hand fed for all of the lives. You do not want to be responsible for creating problems someone else has to deal with, so try to find out the basics regarding structure.

Know the colors and the proper breeding of these colors. Please check out www.gdca.org for more information. Even if you are breeding for pets you do not want to breed mismarks.

Taking Care of Mom

Once the breeding is done, the litter will arrive in approximately 63 days. During gestation, it is very important she receive a quality diet in adequate amounts. If desired, an ultra-sound can be done 28 days after the breeding to find out if it took.

Additionally, you may want to take an x-ray of your bitch one week prior to delivery to determine the number of puppies. This will help during delivery time-you'll know if she's finished or you still have a puppy or two left.

The whelping area you prepare should be in the house, as you will need to attend the delivery. The room should be warm, and in an area where you can monitor the mom and puppies easily. A whelping box needs to be built. Consult with your vet on the whelping procedure and supplies that are needed.

When the bitch whelps, a general rule of thumb among Dane breeders is no more than 2-3 hours between puppies. Anything more than that could indicate a problem. C-sections are common among Danes.

The New Puppies

The new litter must be monitored carefully. Daily weighing and close observation will help pinpoint any potential problems. Supplemental hand feeding is often required for puppies not gaining appropriately. During the first week or two, mom and puppies must be watched 24/7. If dewclaws are to be removed, they should be done around 2 days of age.

When the puppies start to move around, the breeder must work hard to socialize them. After all, they are going to be pets, so they need as much handling as possible. This needs to continue until the puppies go into their new homes.

Worming can begin at 4 weeks of age. Discuss with your vet a schedule for worming. Puppies should always be wormed before going into their new homes.

Vaccines, as appropriate for age, should be given to your puppies before they go into their new homes. Discuss an appropriate schedule with your vet.

At seven weeks of age, the puppies can go to their new homes. Puppies should not leave before that time frame. It is very important to their social development that they stay with their littermates until that time.

Homes For Your Puppies

Please, screen your homes carefully. A nice couple might be great people—but not a suitable home for a Dane. Require fenced yards, attendance of a puppy kindergarten and obedience class, and spaying/neutering of pets.

Sending Your Puppies Out

You want your purchasers to be prepared for their Dane ownership, so you should plan on sending the following out:

- Vet records on vaccines and wormings
- Recommendations for qualified Dane vets

- Obedience classes in the purchaser's area
- Written contract covering fenced yard, spaying/neutering, and "take back" clause.
- Diet information and a small supply of food
- Information on housebreaking and crate training
- AKC registration papers properly completed

Please-Be Responsible and Honest

Please be honest about your dogs. Don't label a dog as show quality if you've never shown. Don't sell a mismarked color as rare.

Many perfectly nice people are labeled as back yard breeders simply because they do not take the time to educate themselves about breeding and the responsibility it involves. They don't understand why rescue groups and show people frown upon them and are critical.

One of the biggest reasons is that the casual breeder does not "care for their own". A responsible breeder always takes a dog back of their breeding if the purchaser can no longer keep it...whether the dog is one year old or ten. Since the casual breeder won't take the dog back, rescue groups have to. The vast majority of dogs coming into rescue are from casual breeders. It doesn't take long for busy rescue volunteers to get tired of taking the responsibility for other people's dogs.

Hopefully this brochure has given you some food for thought, and you will have enough love and concern for the wonderful Great Dane breed to proceed in a caring and thoughtful manner.