

Why Whelp Watch?

After having a web cam on my litters for several years, I have found the camera to be wonderful for my clients. They can tap into my site and see their babies any time they wish. This does a few things for me:

- * It stops the "is she in labor yet?" phone calls.
- * It reduces the number of visits to see puppies (thus reducing the chance of outside viruses coming in).
- * It increases family participation in the life of a puppy.
- * It helps me keep my whelping box clean (when there is a camera on your box, you tend to be obsessive about cleaning).
- * It permits people to observe normal whelping and puppy raising without families falling prey to that "one litter so the children can enjoy the miracle of birth" notion.
- * It shows the public how much work goes into whelping and raising a normal litter.

and last but not least...

- * It can save the life of a puppy:

Once upon a time, we had been up for the usual three days, sleeping in shifts, in order to monitor a new mother and her puppies. My husband suggested a nice relaxing soak in the Jacuzzi, and since mom and babies were all sleeping soundly, I agreed it would be nice. I took the phone outside with me, and as we relaxed with a glass of wine, the phone rang.... "Ma'am, you don't know me (he had a deep southern drawl), but I live in South Carolina, and I've been watching your webcam. I'm calling, because I think your bitch just laid on a puppy!". I quickly thanked him and ran in to check. Indeed, she had rolled on a puppy, and I was able to retrieve him and place him to happily nurse in front of his mother. It was on that day that the webcam really paid off!

- * It can save an entire litter:

While out of town on a family emergency, and having left my husband home with a very pregnant girl, not due for seven days, she went into early labor. While my husband is very skilled at whelping, I was frantic. I was able to log into my computer, and watch him and monitor the labor and delivery. When the bitch shut down mid-way through, I knew from watching that her pushes were ineffective, and she obviously had more puppies. We communicated via phone, and from what I was able to observe, I was able to instruct him to get to the emergency vet and have a c-section done on our girl, thus saving the remaining precious puppies. Again, the webcam helped save lives.

A final event that sealed the idea of Whelp Watch in my mind happened in May of 2008 when we went to see our daughter in Texas. Our daughter was expecting a baby any day, and with little to do but watch her tummy, I searched the web. I happened upon a site that taught me a great deal about the value of a webcam. The site is called Mare Stare . Now, I don't own a horse, but found myself watching the many web cams focused on mares about to deliver their foals. I learned more about foaling than I ever dreamed of learning, and found myself following specific mares that were due, and watching intently waiting for her to foal. I learned their names, how many foals they had delivered in the past, and what State they were in. I worried and wrung my hands while they delivered, and rejoiced in front of my computer monitor when their precious foal took those first breaths.

Mares can foal many-many weeks after their due date. It's impossible for the owners to observe them constantly. A world-wide community of watchers, does the trick nicely! So farm owners provide their phone numbers, and ask that anyone who sees anything of concern, to call the number. However, one event on Mare Stare drove home the value of a webcam viewing community for animals, when one foal was born with people watching, and died in its sack for lack of human attention. Happily, I was not watching that mare, but I was reading the forum when it occurred. The owner of Mare Stare admonished the community to always call if a number is provided. The intent of Mare Stare is for the purpose of saving the life of a mare or foal that may be in trouble.

Convinced that webcams are more than just windows into our world, but rather, can be life savers, Whelp Watch was born. I only needed to gather the courage to create it, and formulate the ideas. I called Heather at Mare Stare to let her in on my idea, and to let her know that Whelp Watch would not be a camstream provider (thus cutting in on their provider services), but rather, simple links to the webcams of kennel owners. She was supportive and cheerful.

So, here it is, a community of canine owners who have their dogs, especially bitches in whelp, on webcam for the world to watch. If the community saves just one puppy or one bitch, then the work will have been worth it!

Enjoy!
Dian