

# Thinking of Breeding Wolfdogs? Think Hard!

By Christine Burkett

I would like to take a minute to speak to those who are new to the wolfdog world or who are just beginning to get the notion that they would like to breed or own several animals.

It's no picnic folks! Owning wolves and wolfdogs is a full-time job. It is expensive in both money and time. These animals can consume you.

If you have a mate in your life or ever plan to, they must be as committed to the animals as you are. It really isn't enough that they "understand" your devotion and commitment to them. They have to feel it, too, at least to some extent, because there will be times when they (the animals) will have to come first.

The house payment may be due, but an animal is sick and needs emergency medical care. The house payment will have to wait. The kids need new school clothes but you are out of the high priced feed the animals require so the animals get fed and the kids make do with hand-me-downs or only a couple of new outfits. It's Christmas but new fencing has to be purchased because you have two females who are coming into their own and one of them is going to die if you don't separate them.

Then comes breeding time. That can stress any sane person. It is a constant fear that something might happen. One of the more aggressive animals may escape and try to kill another animal. Some females may want to fence fight. Some males may become overly possessive of their mates and turn nasty during the breeding period. The list goes on and on.

I am ASSuming you have done your pre-sales and have properly screened homes and qualified buyers for those expected pups long before you allowed breeding to take place. If not, I surely hope you separated "Rover and Lady" and never allowed them to breed.

After breeding season, there is a lull for about six weeks. Then you have to start preparations for the new arrivals. If you don't already

have birthing areas set up, that has to be done. More money and hard work!!! When you separate the dams from the sires, there will be constant crying and again, the worry about one getting out to find his or her mate.

Then comes puppy season. "Oh SH--!!!!!! Kismet had seven puppies and I only have four qualified buyers! Now what?" You get on the phone and call everybody you know. You talk to other breeders and explain your predicament and beg them to send you any buyers they don't have pups for (and pray they will).

If they are high content wolfdogs, chances are you will have to pull and bottle feed the pups. Are you ready for that commitment?

Don't get me wrong. I loved my pups, and I have missed not having them, but by the end of puppy season, this was one tired, stressed-out old lady.

Starting at about 10 days old, pups are your life. Sleep becomes something someone else gets, not you. You are up feeding every two to four hours with all seven screaming at once. "Damn, have I already fed this one or was it that one?" The bedding has to be changed several times a day. The washer and dryer never shut down. The microwave goes out and you have to buy another one before the next feeding. With what money? With your car payment money.



Better run by the grocery store, too, and pick up more formula makings because you are low. I never dreamed it would take so much to feed these little rascals. “Hell, I’m going through three cans of goats milk a day and all that high priced yogurt, and on and on. Oh well, that’s ok. I’ll make enough money off of the pups to buy that new set of tires for the car.”

“What’s this? Why have the pups got the runs? This one looks weak!” Off to the vet’s office you go. “They have Coccidia?! What’s that? The medicine is how much?! You gotta be kidding! And I gotta give it for two weeks?!”

Between the vet visit, the wormings, and the medicine, you just spent what you expected to get for at least one of the pups. There went the house payment again.

Oh, and let’s not forget about the puppy vaccinations. Even if you give them yourself, it is expensive, and they will need a couple of shots each before they are placed in their new homes.

The pups need to be socialized, so you hold and cuddle the little buggers, talking to them and rubbing their tummies, and you beg your mate and/or kids to do the same. But what do you get in response? “But Mom, I have a date, and I just got my shower!” “Sorry, Hon. I am exhausted from a long, hard day at work. I really don’t feel like it.” So you do it all.

Now they are old enough to let out on the floor to play. You buy stock in the paper towel and disinfectant companies ahead of puppy season if you are smart because you are going to use a LOT of each. Also, I hope you and your family don’t mind that the carpet will never be the same—nor will your hardwood floors.

The buyer you were just sure was RIGHT for one of your pups so you didn’t get a deposit tells you when you call to let him know his pup is ready, “Oh, sorry, I meant to call. I got a pup from Joe Blow a couple of weeks ago.



I’m sure, though, you won’t have any trouble placing the pup. Thanks for the call. Do keep me in mind for next year.” Yeah, right.

So now you have four unplaced pups and they are ready to go and they are eating you out of house and home.

Then you get that dreaded call. One of the pups you placed last year has to go. The owner can no longer keep him. What to do? You build another pen with money you absolutely DON’T have or you find someone else willing to take him.

This is only a small part of what it means to be a wolfdog breeder and why it takes commitment from every member of your two-legged family.

If you are thinking about breeding, read this article again. Keep it with you and remember; I just hit *some* of the highlights. There’s much I never even touched on.



*Christine Burkett is a former breeder of both wolves and wolfdogs. Her kennel name is “Casa Lobo,” and many of the animals in today’s wolfdog lines come from her stock and/or are related to her stock. Her knowledge of wolves and wolfdogs is extensive. She is also a member of NLA. If you ever attend one the NLA Rendezvous, you should meet and talk with her. She is a wealth of knowledge and information.*