

Dam welfare can affect the health and wellbeing of her puppies.

This study explored changes in physical and behavioral signs of dam welfare in the time before and after giving birth.

## Methods

59 dams from 8 commercial breeding kennels

Tested 6 weeks and 1 week before giving birth, and 4 and 8 weeks after

Assessed for:

- Behavioral responses to a stranger approaching
- Physical health
- Stress hormones
- Parasites



Dams were more likely to be housed singly after giving birth, which may have affected their behavior.

Stress hormones increased between 4 and 8 weeks after giving birth.

Some dams had parasites, but overall were in good health. Tear staining was observed in 21-35% of dogs.



## Results

Dams were friendly and took more treats from strangers after giving birth than before. These behaviors may have been influenced by the physical demands of nursing.

## Research Takeaways

There were no major changes to dam welfare during the observation period.

Some changes, such as increases in stress hormones, were likely due to the physical demands of pregnancy and nursing.

Future research should explore how environmental and management factors influence dam welfare during pregnancy and nursing.