### Parturition length in Labrador Retriever bitches (Canis lupus)

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Parturition is stressful for the breeder, the dam and the newborns. The objective of this study was i) to identify in the canine species factors impacting parturition length, defined as the time elapsed from the expulsion of the first and the last puppy. Data from 135 whelpings of 83 Labrador Retriever dams (1,136 puppies, with a 1:1 sex ratio) were retrospectively collected from one kennel: parity and age of the dam, litter size (total number of puppies born), total litter weight (sum of the birth weights of all puppies including stillborns), presence of at least one stillborn puppy, pregnancy length (from ovulation to whelping), time at beginning of parturition (night 22h-06h/day 6h-22h). Median parturition length was 380 minutes (min:119, max: 1200). Age of dams at parturition was 4.2 years ( $\pm$  1.6; mean $\pm$ SD; min: 1.7; max: 7.5) and parity was 2.5 ( $\pm$  1.3; min: 2; max: 5). Mean litter size was 8.0 ( $\pm$  2.4; min: 2; max: 13) and total litter weight was 3352 g ( $\pm$  851.2; min: 860; max: 5720). A proportion of 23.7% of the whelpings occurred at night. Stillbirth rate was 4.0%. Multivariate statistical analysis (linear regression, R-software) evidenced that the total litter weight was the only factor to significantly influence parturition length (p=0.031); presence of a stillborn puppy tended to (p=0.059). These results have to be confirmed in several kennels and in other canine breeds. The impact of parturition length on puppies mortality and neonatal growth remains to be evaluated.

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### Introduction

Parturition is stressful for the breeder, the dam, and the newborns. A longer parturition length could cause a higher mortality rate with newborns, thus, the varying factors that influence parturition length need to be identified

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The objective was to identify factors (pregnancy length, litter weight, litter size, parity, age of dam, stillbirths and time of day) impacting parturition length in the canine species.

### Materials and Methods

Data was obtained from 1 French kennel (CESECAH) for Guide dogs for the Blind for a total of 83 Labrador Retriever dams.

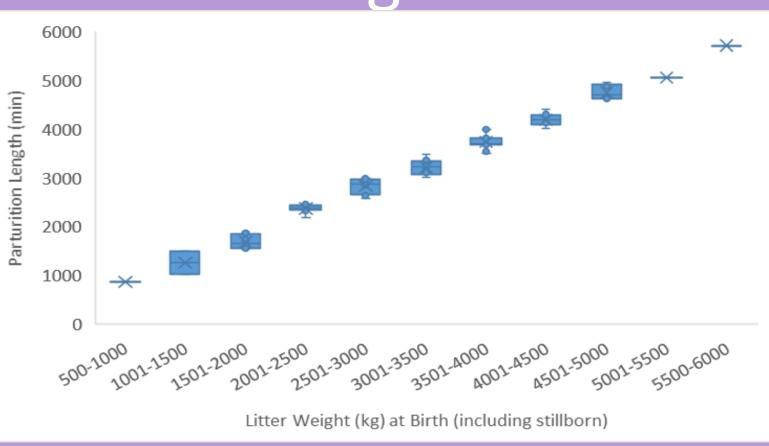
A total of 1,136 puppies were born from 135 whelpings with vaginal delivery between 2001-2017. Parturition length in minutes was calculated starting from the time of the expulsion of the first puppy until the expulsion of the last puppy. A multivariate analysis was conducted on factors impacting parturition length. Statistics were done using R-Software.

### Discussion and Conclusions

Parturition length was only affected by litter weight. No other variables, either related to the dam (age, parity), to the moment of whelping (pregnancy length, time of day) or to the litter (litter size, presence of at least one stillborn) showed any significant impact. These results have to be confirmed in several kennels and in other canine breeds.

The impact of parturition length on puppies mortality and neonatal growth remains to be evaluated.

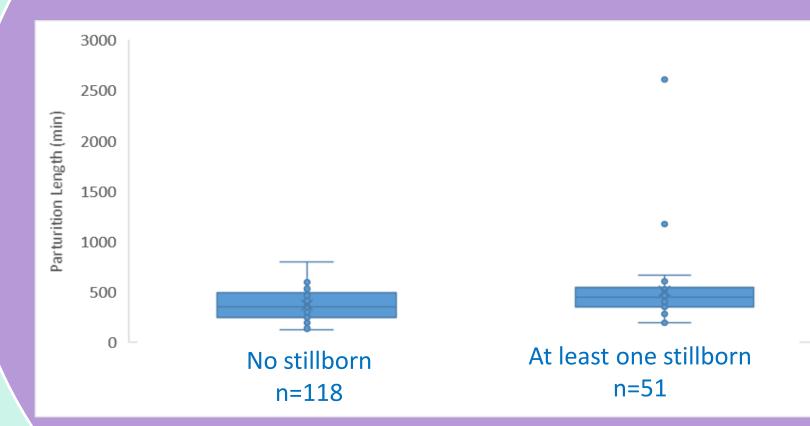
### Litter Weight at Birth



Average litter weight: 3380 (± 851.2) grams. Minimum: 860 grams. Maximum: 5720 grams.

IMPACT p=0.031

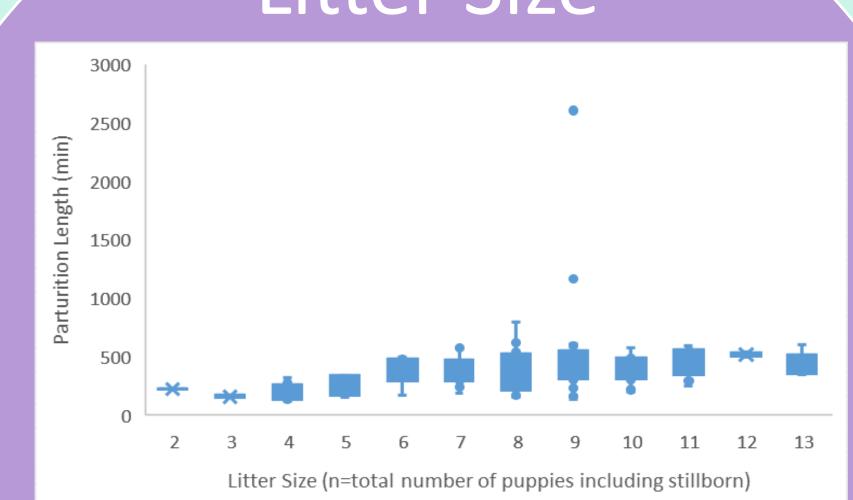
# Stillborn puppy (≤ 1) per litter



A total of 30.2% of litters had at least 1 stillborn.

NO IMPACT p=0.059

### Litter Size



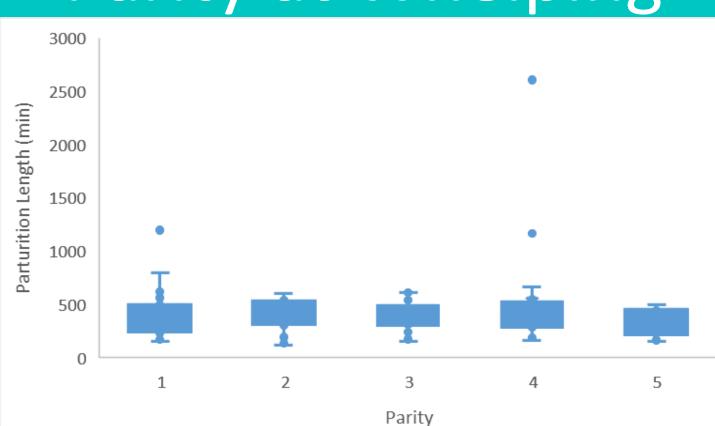
Average litter size: 8.0 (± 2.35).

Minimum litter: 2.

Maximum litter: 13.

NO IMPACT p=0.938

### Parity at Whelping



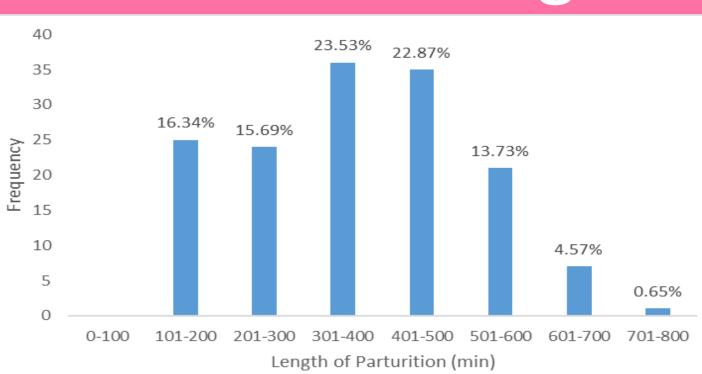
Average parity was 2.5 (± 1.3).

Minimum: 1.

Maximum: 5.

NO IMPACT p=0.845

### Parturition Length

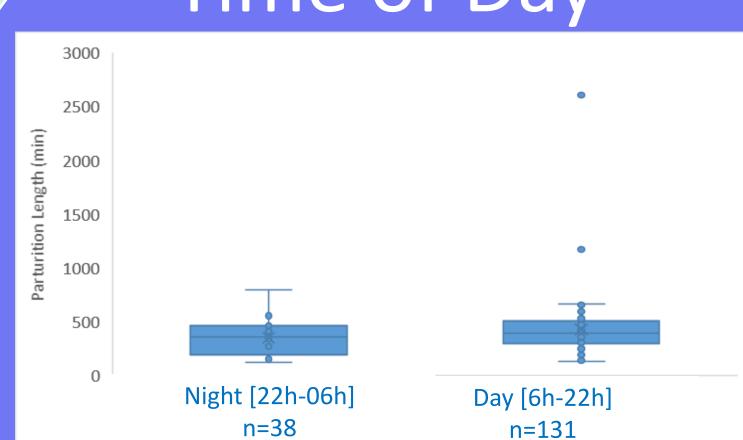


Average parturition length: 380 minutes.

Minimum: 119 minutes.

Maximum: 2610 minutes.

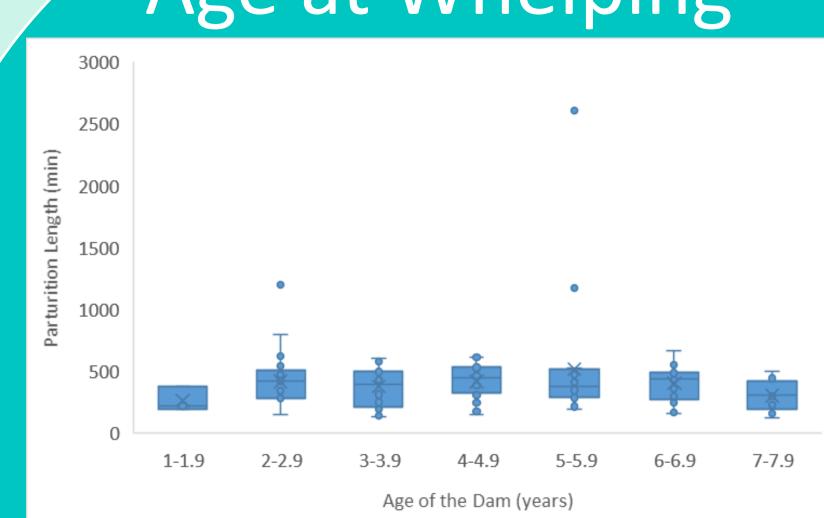
### Time of Day



A total of 23.7% of whelpings occurred at night.

NO IMPACT p=0.138

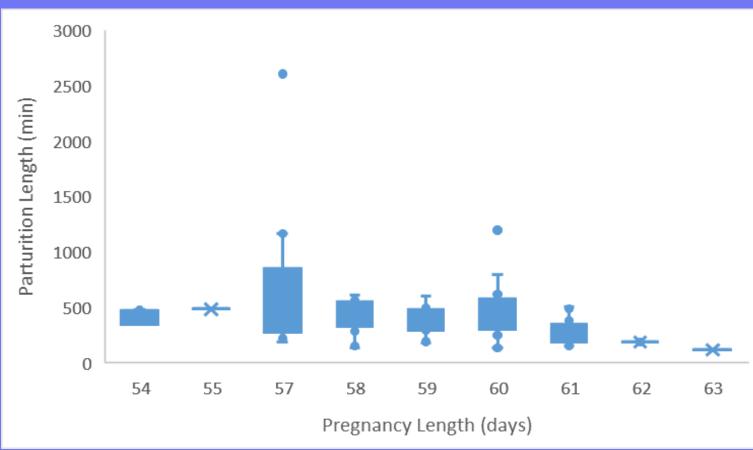
### Age at Whelping



Average age at whelping: 4.2 (± 1.6) years. Minimum: 1.7 year. Maximum: 7.5 years.

**NO IMPACT** 

Pregnancy Length from Ovulation



Average pregnancy length: 59.1 days (± 1.4). Minimum: 54 days.

Maximum: 63 days.

NO IMPACT p=0.401

