



Southside Animal Hospital

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What To Expect When Your Pet Is Expecting

You are expecting your pet to have babies. Things are either exciting or stressful around the house. If this is planned, you are happy and excited. If this is unplanned, there are thoughts of what you are going to do with these babies. If your pet is expecting an unplanned litter, after she finishes nursing and her milk is dry we can spay her to prevent other unplanned litters. Whether planned or unplanned, you no doubt have many questions about what to expect and potential complications.

How can I confirm my pet is pregnant? To confirm any pregnancy your pet must be 30 days along. In some cases we can feel with our hands and see if your pet is pregnant. This method does have a large degree of inaccuracy to it. More reliable methods are ultrasound or a simple blood test.

How many babies will my pet have? There is no way to be 100% sure of the number, especially in large litters. However, taking a radiograph when your dog is 50 to 60 days along can give a very good idea of the number your pet will have.

How long will my pet be pregnant? Your pet will carry her babies anywhere from 60 to 66 days. To get an idea of when your pet will give birth, count 63 days from the last day of breeding. You will need to start watching your pet closely 1 week before the expected due date.

What do I need to do with my pet before she gives birth? Once you confirm your pet is pregnant, there are several things you should do in preparation for the event.

Diet - Your pet needs to be placed on puppy or kitten food. She will need the extra protein and calcium in the food. You do not need to give vitamins or supplements if you are on a good quality puppy or kitten food.

Whelping Box - You should also make a whelping box for your pet. This can be a simple cardboard box with one side cut out leaving a small lip at the bottom. The lip is to keep the puppies or kittens from getting out of the box. Line the box with soft bedding and place the box in a dark quiet area. Your pet will want peace and quiet when she gives birth.

Take a Rectal Temperature - You should start taking your pet's temperature rectally two times a day one week prior to the date you counted as the due date. This can be done with any digital thermometer. Your pet's normal temperature is 100.5 F to 102.5 F. Twelve to twenty-four hours prior to giving birth the temperature will drop to 99 F to 100 F. If you take the temperature and it is down, then retake the temperature in 2 hours. If it is still down, your pet should give birth within 12 to 24 hours of giving birth and you should



watch your pet carefully.

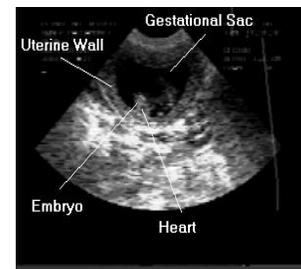
What will my pet do when she is giving birth? Through the pregnancy you begin to see your pet putting on weight and see changes start at specific times.

1 -2 weeks before birth - Her mammary glands will begin to swell.

1 -4 days before birth - Her vaginal area begins to swell and milk will begin to collect in the mammary glands.

Nesting behavior begins - This will begin about 2 days prior to birth.

Your pet will begin to take things and make a bed, usually in



a dark quiet place. This will be a good place to put your whelping box. Do make sure that it is in an accessible place and not under a bed. If there are problems, you need to be able to easily get to your pet.

When active labor begins - You will see her begin to have visible abdominal contractions. The first baby usually comes within 4 hours of this starting. A baby will come out of the vaginal opening.

Sac and Placenta - The baby will be in a sac and be followed by the placenta. There is a sac and placenta for each baby. Your pet will remove the sac from the baby and lick the baby to stimulate it to breathe. Your pet will also eat the sac and placenta so that the nesting area stays clean.

Frequency of birth - Babies may come out very quickly, within minutes of each other, or up to 2 hours apart. Most commonly, they come about every 30 minutes. The babies may come out head or tail first. Either way is normal in dogs and cats.

Paying attention to the babies - The mother may not be very attentive to the new babies while she is still giving birth. After she is through she will pay much more attention to the babies.

Knowing when she is finished - When she is through giving birth, your pet will relax, be attentive to the babies, and stop having abdominal contractions.

Do I need to help my pet? No. In most cases, you do not need to help your pet. Most dogs and cats will have their babies naturally. The best thing to do is to leave your pet alone in their quiet place and check on them every 15 minutes. If you stay with your pet, you may distract them and cause a delay in the birth of the babies. If there are complications, you may need to intervene or bring your pet in for veterinary care. There are certain breeds such as English Bulldogs and French Bulldogs that always need the intervention of a caesarean section to have birth.

What are signs of complications? If you see any of the following signs, your pet needs veterinary care to save the life of the babies or your pet.

Muscle tremors, panting, and/or seizures happening any time 1 week prior to birth or through the nursing period

Not giving birth within 4 hours of active labor starting

More than 2 hours between babies with continued active labor

A baby stuck in the birth canal for more than 15 minutes

A green or black vaginal discharge after through giving birth

The mother acting depressed or weak

Hard, swollen, or painful mammary glands

What do I expect after the babies are here? Continue to feed your pet the puppy or kitten food until she is through nursing. She needs this extra nutrition for the milk production. She may also have a mild bloody discharge for up to 6 weeks. Your pet should keep her babies close to keep them warm and feed them regularly. She may be protective and not want to let you or other animals near her babies. The babies should be content and grow in size a little every day. At 3 weeks old you can start to try to feed the babies a gruel made from kitten or puppy food and warm water. It may take several days for them to learn how to eat. It is important to start trying so that they can quit nursing your pet. Puppies begin their vaccinations at 6 weeks of age and should be dewormed for the first time at 2 weeks of age. Kittens start their vaccinations at 9 weeks of age and can be dewormed for the first time at 6 weeks of age.

