

Park Veterinary Centre



PREGNANT BITCHES

The gestation period of the bitch is 63 days +/- 2 days. Pregnancy diagnosis is usually done at approximately 30 days after mating by means of an ultrasound scan.

It is strongly advised to worm your bitch from day 40 of pregnancy to 2 days after whelping if you wish to reduce the chance of the puppies being born with roundworm. Wormers licensed for pregnant bitches are available at the surgery.

It is recommended to check your bitch's temperature (thermometers are also available at the surgery) twice daily, a week before her expected due date. Normal temperature for a dog is 101.5 °F (38.6 °C). Bitches experiencing a temperature of less than 100° F (37.7 °C) for more than 12 hrs are likely to whelp within 24 hrs.

First Stage Labour

Your bitch will become restless and pant excessively. She will usually refuse food and may shred her bedding or dig. Throughout the pregnancy there may be a slight mucoid discharge from her vulva. Just before whelping this increases in volume. On average, stage one of labour lasts 6 -12 hours but may be as long as 48 hours especially if the bitch is having her first litter.

Second Stage Labour

She should stop panting at this stage and begin straining. The first sign of imminent birth is the appearance at the vulva of the amniotic sac (also known as the water bag). Your bitch may stand, crouch or lie down for the actual birth. Do not be too anxious to help with the puppies if she knows what to do. It is normal for her to consume the afterbirths (these are green in colour). If the bitch does not pay attention to the pups you must intervene. Clear the mouth and nose of mucus and place the pups on their stomachs and rub them vigorously with a towel. This will help stimulate the breathing. If your bitch does not cut the umbilical cords herself it may be necessary for you to do it. Sterilised scissors should be used to cut the cord at least 3 cm from the pup. Keeping the pups warm is also very important. A heat lamp or hot water bottle may be used – do not have in direct contact with the pups.

If the following occurs it is important to contact a vet: -

- 1) If there is constant unproductive straining for more than ½ hr with no appearance of a pup.
- 2) A pup is visible but appears to be stuck
- 3) Any evidence of green discharge with no appearance of pups.
- 4) If there is more than a 2 hour interval between the birth of pups.

Following the birth of the puppies, it is recommended that a vet checks over the bitch and her pups. It is possible to arrange a house visit if this is more convenient than a trip to the vets.

We advise that the pups be weighed at birth and then daily in order to ensure each pup is feeding well and gaining weight. Substitute milk and puppy nursing kits are available at the surgery if you should need them.

PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT THE SURGERY AT ANY STAGE FOR ADVICE