

**Damory Veterinary
Clinic**

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Small Animal Factsheet



THE PREGNANT BITCH

From our experience at Damory Vets, we have found that this can be a confusing area for clients. We would advise that if your bitch has been mated and you do want her to continue with the pregnancy, it is very important that you take the time to research the process early on so that you know what to expect. However, we thought it would be useful to provide a short (and basic) 'quick reference guide' for those who didn't get round to doing their homework!

PREGNANCY

Time from first mating to full-term: 58-70days, often at the lower end in small breeds but average of 63 days. Pups born before 57 days have poor survival rates.

Ultrasound can be performed from day 25, ideally day 28. This can give an idea of how many viable pups she may have, but it must be stressed that this is an estimate only.

PREGNANCY CHANGES

Nipple enlargement is noted from about day 30 and there is a change in weight/body shape by day 40. A watery secretion may be seen from teats from day 60.

Her appetite will increase and would typically increase by 30% in the last trimester (from week 5). Avoid supplementing food with calcium. Feed a balanced commercial food with or without the addition of puppy food towards the end of the pregnancy.

If you think she is overdue (over 65 days since mating) it would be a good idea to check her over.

If she seems unwell approaching full-term she should be checked promptly.

At full-term, to see watery, clear fluid from the vulva is normal and is the equivalent of 'waters breaking' in humans. However, a bloody discharge should be checked by a vet immediately.

LABOUR

The majority of whelpings proceed without a problem. Therefore, it is important to be vigilant but not over-attentive as sometimes too much fuss can unsettle the bitch and stall the whelping process.

First stage labour –Up to 36hrs prior to birth

She will begin to show signs such as restlessness, panting, agitation, and nest making.

Second Stage Labour- birth of Puppies

Normal: Can take anything from 5-30mins from active straining for a pup to be born. A rest period (no straining) of up to 3 hours between pups can be normal. The mother will break the umbilical cord and may eat the placenta. This is natural behaviour but sometimes may give her diarrhoea afterwards so perhaps this should be restricted. Green/black pigment is normal AS LONG AS a pup is produced fairly soon afterwards.

Puppies can go as long as 10 minutes without breathing. Rubbing them vigorously and clearing any debris from the mouth and nose can help stimulate breathing.

WHEN TO CALL US

If:

- The bitch has been straining constantly for over 30 minutes with no sign of a foetus. If a foetus is seen but seems to be stuck then gentle manipulation/pulling can help but if this is not successful then vet should be contacted without delay.
- A black/green discharge is seen and no puppy/sac is seen by 30 minutes later. The discharge is perfectly normal, provided that there is no long delay between seeing the discharge and a puppy being born.
- Your bitch is showing signs of weak straining with still no pup after 2hrs
- It has been more than 4hrs since birth of last puppy

It is important that both mother and pups are cared for well after the birth to reduce the risk of death in the early days of the puppies' lives. Good hygiene is very important. It is also important to check the puppies to make sure that they are feeding well and seem contented after feeding. It is a good idea to weigh them regularly to make sure they are gaining weight well.

Once again, this is not a comprehensive guide and if you have not already done so, it is highly recommended that you do read a more in-depth book. It is important that you are aware of the risks of breeding and that you have an idea of how best to rear puppies – it can be exhausting and expensive but also very rewarding.

(Revised Aug 2011)