



Railway Veterinary Clinic

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How to care for a pregnant bitch

Length of Pregnancy

Pregnancy usually lasts about 62 days (9 Weeks). One of our vets can diagnose pregnancy after 28 days, by feeling the bitch's abdomen or using ultrasound. Please ring us to make an appointment.

Feeding

Once you are sure your bitch is pregnant change her feed to dry puppy food and gradually increase her portions. Keep her on the puppy nuts until the pups have finished sucking.

Vaccination

Ideally all bitches should be fully vaccinated before mating. If the bitch has not been vaccinated before her pregnancy you need to wait until her pregnancy is half way through and then vaccinate.

Worming

Bitches should be wormed during pregnancy. Only some worming products are safe to use on pregnant bitches, therefore check with us. Nursing bitches should also be dosed 2-4 weeks after giving birth. **All puppies should be wormed at two weeks of age and every two weeks until 12 weeks of age, after this every 3 months dosing is necessary.**

Whelping (Giving Birth)

The bitch will go off her food between one and two days before the birth. Stage one of labour may last from 2 - 24 hours. The bitch may become restless and pant excessively. Stage two begins with the first big contraction or straining movement. If the first puppy has not appeared after an hour one of our vets should be contacted for advice. At stage three, normally a dark coloured sack of fluids will appear before the first puppy. The puppy will be wrapped on another fluid filled sack. The puppy should be born very soon after this stage. The mother should instinctively examine her new puppy, tearing open the sack to release the puppy. If the bitch cannot do this it must be done for her. After another small contraction the afterbirth should come out. The bitch will instinctively eat this and attempt to clear up the fluids. Green and brown staining from these fluids is normal. If the puppy remains attached to the placenta and the cord is not broken by the birth, you can do this by tearing it with your fingers, being careful not to pull the puppy's tummy. Keep an eye on the number of afterbirths, there should be one per puppy. Most mothers do not start feeding their litter until after the last delivery. When all puppies have been delivered, the mother settles down and allows her litter to suckle together, contact us if the mother cannot produce sufficient milk.

Retained afterbirth can be dangerous and could poison your dog. Contact us if you are in any doubt whether all afterbirth has come out.

WHEN TO CALL US

- **If contractions have not begun within two hours of the water breaking**
- **If a puppy has not emerged after 15 minutes**
- **Caesarean is common for breeds of dogs with large heads and in small breeds for small litters.**

If you have any questions call us on 091 841935