

LABOR AND DELIVERY

Prior to labor, provide the mother an area to deliver and care for her pups. This should be available to the mom 1 to 2 weeks prior to the expected delivery date so she can become comfortable with the area. The box should be away from any drafts and should have some privacy. Do not put the box in the middle of a room where a lot of people will interrupt her. The sides should be tall enough so the puppies cannot crawl out.

Approximately 10 to 24 hours prior to delivery of the pups, the mother's temperature will drop below 99 degrees F. This drop in temperature is temporary and will go back to normal. The next stage of labor involves the cervix dilating. This takes approximately 6 to 12 hours. What you may notice is the mother appearing restless, pacing, and not eating well. During this time they exhibit nesting behavior (digging material to create a nest) or look for a place to be by themselves. The next stage of labor involves the pups being delivered. This period may last from a few hours up to 24 hours. The contractions will be able to be seen when watching the mother (tensing of abdominal muscles). When the pups come out of the birth canal they will be covered in a membrane filled with fluid. The mother will usually remove this right away so the pup can breathe. If the mother can't, you can remove the membrane and dry the puppy with a soft towel. Rub the puppy gently but vigorously to stimulate breathing without hurting the pup. You can use a new ear bulb syringe to gently suck fluid out of the pup's nose and mouth. Only do this a little, too much suction can cause damage to the pup. Usually the placenta (a dark green material) will be passed within 5 to 15 minutes after the birth of the puppy. It is important to keep track of the number of placentas passed with the number of pups. If, after the birth is over and there are more pups than placentas, please call your veterinarian as the mother may need an injection of medication to help remove the retained placenta.

Usually the time from the start of contractions to the birth of a puppy is 10 to 30 minutes. Active contractions for more than 30 minutes with no puppy is an emergency and a veterinarian should be consulted immediately. In addition, the passage of green/black fluid with no puppy is also an emergency and a veterinarian should be called.

The mother will usually bite the umbilical cord to tear it. If this does not happen, you can use clean thread and tie a double knot ½ inch from the body. After tying the knot, use clean scissors (cleaned with alcohol) to cut thread and place iodine on a cotton ball and dab the end of the cut umbilical cord.

Keep the pups with mom in a warm, dry place. It is not recommended to use a heating lamp unless it is very cold. If so, make sure the pups have a space where they can crawl away from the heat of the lamp.

It is best to keep the pups with mom; they need to start eating as soon as possible and eat every 1 to 2 hours.

If you have any questions, please contact Plantation Animal Hospital at 284-0087.