

Pregnancy Management

This handout is to be used as a guide to help in pregnancy management.

Prior to breeding, regular deworming, heartworm preventatives and flea control should always be implemented. The bitch should be current on the necessary vaccines prior to breeding. Bitches should not be overweight; however, starting a weight reduction program while pregnant is not advisable. Regular exercise during pregnancy can lead to fewer dystocias or problem births. A normal gestation period is approximately 63-65 days for dogs and cats. Exact dates should be kept such as the first day vaginal blood droplets are noticed, length of proestrus, which day(s) bred or inseminated, and if there are any previous pregnancies and/or reproductive problems. If progesterone levels are measured, the exact length of gestation for dogs is 63 days post ovulation.

A high-quality, balanced commercial dog food should be fed during pregnancy. It is also highly recommended once pregnancy is confirmed to add Fortiflora once daily to the diet. This is a probiotic supplement which helps boost the mother's immune system. In addition, a fatty acid supplement high in omega 3 fatty acids (DHA and EPA) dosed at 66 mg/kg is proven to help with eye and brain development and is recommended for pregnant females. We recommend *Free Form* fatty acid supplement. Other supplements like calcium or minerals should be avoided unless prescribed by a veterinarian. For the first six weeks the amount of food does not need to be increased but during the final 3 weeks of pregnancy the bitch's caloric intake should be increased to 1½ times maintenance and continued through weaning. Smaller and more frequent meals should be offered as well as more frequent walks since the enlarged uterus will reduce stomach and bladder capacity.

Bitches should be isolated 3 weeks before and after whelping to reduce possible exposure to infectious diseases. A safe and secluded area should be provided that is draft-free for whelping. A whelping box that is easy to clean and easily accessible should be introduced to the bitch 1 week prior to whelping. A rug or blanket should also be provided.

During pregnancy, vaginal discharges are not uncommon. These discharges are usually clear, mucous-like or even slightly pink-tinged. Hemorrhagic or purulent discharges are abnormal and your veterinarian should be notified immediately.

We recommend checking and recording rectal temperatures using a digital thermometer twice daily approximately 10 days prior to whelping date. A drop in temperature to less than 99 degrees F. usually corresponds to whelping within 24

hours (not always seen in cats). An X-ray at this time is also a good idea too see how many fetuses are present as well as a fecal examination to rule out intestinal parasites.

Please feel free to call Plantation Animal Hospital at (904) 284-0087 if you have any questions.