



CAYMAN ANIMAL HOSPITAL

Birth of Puppies

About two weeks before the puppies are due, a nesting box should be introduced to the expectant mother. The box should be made from a washable material and located in a warm and secluded area. The bottom of the box should be lined with an absorbent material that can be changed frequently. Newspapers, towels, or clean rags make excellent bed liners.



The first stage of labor is marked by uterine contractions. The expectant mother appears restless and may pace about the house. She refuses to eat and sometimes vomits. The bitch may isolate herself and exhibit nesting behavior. (Hopefully, nesting will occur in the whelping box.) This behavior is normal and there is little that the owner can do. This stage generally lasts eight to 24 hours.

The second stage of labor begins when the cervix is completely dilated. The delivery of the puppy occurs during this phase. Phase three of labor refers to the expulsion of the placenta and the afterbirth.

After several contractions, the first puppy is born. If the first puppy is not born within 45 minutes after the beginning of contractions, a veterinarian should be called. The time interval between successive puppies is extremely variable and can range anywhere from 30 minutes to several hours. It is not unusual for a mother to rest between groups of puppies.

Generally when each puppy is born, it is enclosed in a membrane or sac. The mother usually licks the puppy's face and rips open the sac. If this sac is not immediately broken by the mother, human intervention is required. The sac must be opened, and the puppy's face must be rubbed. Rubbing the puppy's face with a clean cloth is an excellent method to stimulate breathing.



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A placenta is usually passed within 15 minutes after the birth of a puppy. Occasionally, two placentas may follow two puppies.

There are two normal positions for delivery. The puppies may come out "head first" or "rear first." A "head first" delivery is generally easier than a "rear first" delivery.

Human intervention is required when a puppy is lodged in the birth canal. When this occurs (and the mother is not able to expel the puppy herself), the mother must be restrained and gentle traction applied to the puppy. The puppy is grasped with a clean dry towel and pulled in a downward position, toward the mother's feet. When a puppy is lodged in the birth canal for a considerable amount of time, it is usually born dead.

Following each birth, the remaining portion of the sac should be removed from the puppy's face. Any mucus surrounding the nostrils should be cleared away. Puppies should be placed on a dry clean towel and rubbed. Vigorously rubbing of the puppy stimulates breathing. Using a fine-diameter thread, each umbilical cord should be tied about one inch from the puppy's belly. The cord is cut on the far side of the knot, and the remaining stump (with the cord) is dipped into a white iodine or Betadine solution. If the puppies are similar looking, it is best to number each one with a permanent marker.

Modern veterinary medicine ... Old fashioned care



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When the mother is relaxed and she settles down with her puppies, it is safe to assume that the birthing process is over. Within 12-18 hours after all puppies are delivered, the mother should be examined by a veterinarian.

Normal vaginal discharge is brown, green or red in color. A significant amount of discharge is present following birth. This discharge tapers off and gradually subsides in four to eight weeks. If the discharge is abundant, foul-smelling, pussy, or extremely bloody, a veterinarian should be consulted. Some possible complications that can result from having puppies are: metritis, mastitis and eclampsia