

HERVEY BAY VETERINARY SURGERY

Owner Information Series

WHELPING INFORMATION

The following information should be used as a guide only. Whelping can be different for each individual animal depending on age, breed and size. Please also remember that some of these symptoms can be indicative of other diseases, so be sure to monitor your expectant mother carefully without crowding her.

It is suggested that some type of 'personal area' be provided at least 1 week in advance, such as a whelping box or favourite padded area. This space should be in a quiet, warm place, free of drafts, other animals and children. Mum should be able to move around freely and be able to have some privacy. Bear in mind that birthing is messy, so beneath your blankets should be absorbent towelling or newspaper.

Signs of labour:

- Nest building
- Milk in nipples
- Restlessness
- Scraping at bedding/blankets
- Loss of appetite
- Seeking owner
- Vaginal discharge – mucous/blood
- Whining and howling
- Licking at vulva
- Increased respiration

1ST STAGE OF LABOUR

The duration of this stage, during which the cervix relaxes and opens, averages about 6 – 12 hours (slightly longer in first-time and nervous mothers). Mum is uneasy, apprehensive, frightened, refuses food, may shiver, pant and vomit and glance anxiously at her flank. Some mums are calm, while others are excited. Weak uterine contractions occur intermittently often accompanied by urination.

2nd STAGE OF LABOUR

This stage is characterised by visible straining perhaps in sitting position. In between contractions, she may lick the vulva and some fluid may be visible. The liquid filled membranes can become visible at this point as the head and shoulders of the first foetus is engaging in the pelvis by two or three vigorous contractions. After a few more contractions, the head and shoulders are delivered and the newborn should slip out easily. After the start of regular contractions, the first foetus cannot expect to survive in the uterus without delivery for more than six hours and each of the subsequent newborns about two hours. Contractions/straining efforts are characterised by extension of the head, neck and tail and may be accompanied by a low groan or a shrill cry. Between contractions, Mum will pant rapidly and continuously.

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3rd STAGE OF LABOUR

This is when the foetal membranes and placenta are expelled. This will happen naturally and will usually be eaten by Mum. This process should not be interfered with. This stage is fairly short, lasting about 5 to 15 minutes. Occasionally the next