



Pregnant Animal Care Handout – What to expect when they are expecting?

Heat cycles & length of pregnancy of cats and dogs

Cats can go in to their first heat cycle and become pregnant when they are as young as 6 months old. Outdoor cats usually give birth in the warmer months when it is more likely for the kittens to survive. Cats carry their kittens for approximately 63 days.

Dogs can go in to their first heat a 6 months old while smaller breed dogs often go into heat as early as 4 months old. Dogs carry their puppies for approximately 58-68 days.

Preparing for delivery

Cats

During the last two weeks of her pregnancy, your foster cat will need a place to start nesting. She will want a cozy, private place to have her kittens, and if she doesn't have one she may have them under or on your bed. You will want her nest out of the way of drafts. In the summer time when the AC is running you will want her nest in a place where the AC is not directly blowing on her and her kittens. For the nest itself, you want a box or basket with about an inch of newspaper in the bottom and then 3 or 4 layers of towels or blankets.

Dogs

Dogs should have a quiet area or room prepared for her to have her puppies in. It should be in an area that is easily cleaned, quiet, and free of drafts. Provide her with a whelping box to deliver in, it should be large enough to allow her to stretch out in and allow enough room for the litter of puppies. It should also be easily entered and exited by her yet have sides high enough that the puppies cannot easily get out of. A child's plastic wading pool is a great option.

Items to have on hand while awaiting the birth of your foster kittens or puppies are blankets, towels, newspaper, bottle feeding equipment, Breeders Edge formula or Esbilac dog formula, garbage bags, CHS contact information and your branches emergency clinic contacts and location.

Feeding guidelines for your pregnant foster

Pregnant cats are fed a diet of kitten food, both canned and dry. Offer her as much as she is interested in eating. An easy guideline is to follow the ½ cup of kitten dry food 3 times per day with one to 1.5 tablespoons of wet food per meal. During this time she may likely sleep much of the day. She may also lose her appetite some, but will continue to drink a lot of water. Be sure to follow the CHS foster feeding guidelines unless directed otherwise by the CHS veterinary staff.

Similarly to cats, you should be feeding your pregnant dog foster puppy food both wet and dry, as much as she is interested in eating. (Please refer to the CHS foster feeding guidelines for the amounts based on your foster dog's weight.) She may refuse food up to 12-18 hours pre-labor. Be sure to offer plenty of fresh, clean water at all times to prevent dehydration. Be sure to follow the CHS foster feeding guidelines unless directed otherwise by the CHS veterinary staff.



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Pre-Delivery and Delivery in cats

24-48 hours before labor your foster cat may become more restless and sleep more than before. You may be able to “see” the kittens moving around in her belly. She may start digging around in the blankets in her nesting area. She may have a decreased body temperature. In rare instances, she may even move her nest from one location to another.

As mentioned above 24-48 hours before labor begins, your foster cat may seem more anxious and restless. You may notice an increase in her breathing rate. It is common for the mother to sit with her mouth open and yowl loudly or pace the room. As her labor progresses and uterine contractions begin, pregnant cats will lay on their side and intermittently squat and press downward to expel the kittens. Do not interrupt or disturb the mother during these periods. The first kitten should arrive within an hour after the onset of active labor. Sometimes; labor only last a few minutes before the kitten arrives. Other kittens should arrive with an interval of 10 minutes to an hour between them.

While your foster cat is giving birth you should keep her area quiet, calm and dimly lit. Don't become involved in the birthing, get too close to the nest or do anything to disturb her.

Each kitten arrives in a jelly like membrane filled with clear fluid called the amniotic sac. Good mothers immediately begin licking the kitten forcefully, which shreds this sac allowing the kitten to breathe. The licking stimulates the kittens' circulation and respiration. The mother will also chew off the umbilical cord at this time. It is important to let the mother do these things herself because through licking and mothering the kittens' she bonds with it and recognizes it as her infant. You may see a bloody or dark discharge at her vagina, she may also eat the afterbirths. In total it commonly takes 2-6 hours for the litter to be delivered but each labor is different.

After the birth the mother may not leave the nest area for 24-48 hours, this is normal, just place food and water nearby and let her be.

NOTE: *If your foster cat is in labor for several hours and no kittens are born she may become very tired and her contractions will begin to slow down, if this happens contact CHS immediately or if after hours please contact your branches emergency clinic.*

Pre-delivery and delivery in dogs

About 24 hours prior to the onset of delivery your foster dog may become restless and uninterested in food. She may begin nesting. She may pant, shiver, pace and whine. Her vulva may appear swollen and she may have a clear mucous discharge. The first puppy is usually born 1-2 hours after the onset of contractions. During labor and delivery you should keep her area quiet, calm and dimly lit. About 40% of all puppies are born breach or tail first. Timing between pups can be from 15 minutes to one hour. She should be allowed to rest without interruption unless intervention is needed. The placental membrane often ruptures prior to the puppy's birth. If the membrane does not rupture on its own the mother will most often remove it and sever the umbilical cord. If she is too tired or does not remove the membrane you can gently tear it from the pups nose and mouth. You will need to stimulate this puppy by rubbing it with a small towel gently yet vigorously.

Placentas are expelled and should be counted to be certain the same number of placentas are expelled as puppies are born. The puppies will begin nursing quickly after birth.



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When to contact CHS or after-hours emergency clinic

A kitten or puppy becomes lodged in the birth canal. The mother does not clean the newborns.

You should contact CHS if the mother is not eating or becomes depressed, weak, and lethargic any time before or after the delivery.

The mother continues to have contractions for several hours and no kitten or puppy arrives. The vaginal discharge has a strong, foul odor.

The mother does not settle down within a few hours of the last newborn.

Kittens or puppies will not nurse and/or appear weak. The kittens or puppies mew continuously, do not sleep and are agitated, they are not receiving enough milk to keep their tummies plump and distended.

After they are born

Once they are born you will want to monitor the puppies and kittens to make sure all of them are nursing well. Contact your foster care coordinator to report how many total in the litter, their weight and how they are doing and share any concerns. This is also a great time to ask any questions you may have. Your foster care coordinator will schedule the first checkup appointment at that time. Kittens and puppies along with their mom must be seen every 2 weeks for wellness exams and vaccinations. If they are ill or medically compromised they may need to be seen more often.

Caring for a new mom

Caring for a new mom is just as important as caring for her babies. Mom will need your attention too! She may be protective of her offspring so please be aware of any behavioral changes once they are born. Children should always be supervised around mothers with infants. She should be able to exit her whelping box/nest area for some quiet time away from the babies but still be nearby. Moms should get time away from their offspring each day. For canine moms – this is great time for petting, brushing (if tolerated), a walk outside or just some relaxation time with the family. Feline moms may enjoy some socialization with the family, play time with wand toys or other cat toys, petting and brushing if tolerated.

New moms should be fed 3 times per day as directed by the CHS feeding guidelines. Monitor stool and urine output and note any changes on the foster flow sheet. Make sure moms nipples are clean and free of redness, heat or excessive swelling. The following symptoms may signal an infection or inflammation called mastitis and will require a veterinary exam and possibly medication. Pain, heat, swelling, refusing to allow offspring to nurse from affected gland, milk that appears yellow, thick or bloody, fever. Mom may become depressed, lethargic or lose her appetite. Offspring may become dehydrated, lose weight or begin to fail

Daily care for puppies and kittens.

Every day you must weigh each kitten or puppy and record their weight on the foster flow sheet. Make note of any changes. Are they bright? Alert? Active? Is there any nasal or eye discharge? Have you noticed any loose stool or diarrhea? Keep good records and bring these records with you to all your recheck visits. Any weight loss or concerns should be reported to your foster care coordinator immediately. Unless directed by the CHS team you should not bathe any of your newborns. Be sure to fill out a foster care progress report at least one hour prior to your appointment.



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Growing up kittens and puppies!

Once the kittens reach about 4 weeks old, you can begin to offer them some canned kitten food and water. They will usually learn from watching their mom eat and drink. Some kittens learn faster than others. It helps to separate the kittens from the mom a few hours each day to help the kittens eat without having to compete with mom for food and to help with drying up mom's milk. Gradually increase the amount of time they are separated each day. Once the kittens are eating the wet food well, you can introduce dry kitten food.

At about 4-5 weeks old, you will begin to introduce puppy food to the group. Use dry kibble that has been soaked in water to soften it. You can add a few tablespoons of canned puppy food also. Offer the meal in a large puppy feeder bowl or short sided cookie sheet. Offer puppy food only once per day for the first few days and then increase to twice per day. Feeding time can be fun and exciting but it is also messy!!

In case of emergency

In case of emergency, remain calm! Animals can sense your unease, but cannot understand what is happening. Be calm, yet deliberate in your actions. Put your safety first. It will not do the animal any good if you are bitten or injured in the process. Notify CHS or the emergency clinic that you are on your way. The entire litter (mom and offspring) should be transported together. The information to share with CHS or the emergency clinic when you call is that you are a foster parent for CHS, your estimated time of arrival, nature of emergency and any steps you have already taken along with any relevant medical history. As previously mentioned the litter and mother must be transported together.

If you do visit an emergency clinic afterhours with a foster animal please call your foster care coordinator and leave a message so that we are aware of the situation. The animal(s) will most likely need to be transported back to the shelter for follow up care the morning after.

Important phone numbers

Newington 800-452-0114 Foster care extension 6330 Maternity 6209

Waterford 800-452-0114 extension 5105

Westport 800-452-0114 extension 6608

Emergency after-hours clinics

Pieper Memorial Olsen in Madison & Middletown

Bolton Veterinary Hospital in Bolton

The Veterinary referral and Emergency Clinic, Norwalk