

LHS Cat Pregnancy and Labor Quick Sheet
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Early pregnancy:

- Average gestation period 63-65 days
- Your “Queen” will be eating kitten chow and some wet food throughout the pregnancy to get the extra nutrients and calories
- Cat’s behavior may change or may not. She may run and play as much as normal cats, but may tire easily. She could be more affectionate or more independent.
- She may urinate more frequently. Allow easy access to a clean litter box at all times to decrease accidents.
- Belly will start to swell and mammary glands may start to fill. Other signs include the typical pear shape, swelling of the nipples and vaginal area, licking and removing fur around nipples, and milk discharge may be seen.
- Provide mom with a comfortable environment, safely away from all other pets in the home. A stressed mother is more likely to neglect her kitten’s care.

How close to term is your queen?

Days 59-65:

May feel kitten bodies

Days 60-65:

Possible to see and feel movement

If you see or feel movement the kittens may arrive soon!

1 Week before labor:

- Nesting behaviors appear, allowing her to make a comfy nest. Nesting boxes can be the bottom of a large crate, a large litter pan, a cardboard box.
- Get to know the queen and if she wants you around or not. Cats may delay labor if the environment feels threatening. Be sure to set up her nesting area in a place you can observe from a distance in case the queen is uncomfortable with your presence.
- Labor can be messy so make sure the room you help her settle in is cleanable and has plenty of towels, puppy pads, and sheets available.
- Movement of kittens may be able to be felt along the queens belly. Some vaginal discharge is normal.

24(ish) hours before labor:

- Temperature may drop under 100 degrees Farentheit.
- Make sure she has easy access to water and food in her nesting area
- A queen usually stops eating about 12-24 hours before labor, a small amount of reddish vaginal discharge may be seen.
- Prepare a nesting box with layers using towels, blankets or even puppy pads. You can then remove the soiled linens in layers after the birthing is complete.
- Extra supplies to gather:
 - Sheets, towels, blankets
 - Rectal thermometer
 - Scale
 - Dental floss (unflavored) or embroidery thread
 - Disposable gloves (if you don't want to touch yucky stuff)
 - Heating pads
 - Bulb Syringe

2-4 hours before labor

- Contractions may be seen, this will appear as wavelike movements across her abdomen.
- The cat will gravitate towards her nesting area. She may appear restless, dig or scratch at the corners, or purr rhythmically.
- Mark time contractions begin, if contractions last 24 hours without a kitten she needs to be seen by a vet immediately (9-5 come straight to LHS, after-hours call the emergency number)

The labor process

- You may see stronger more frequent contractions
- As each kitten enters the birthing canal which may be visible through the vulva, the outer membrane “water” will burst, while the inner membrane will remain on the fetus as it is birthed.

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- As the kitten's head enters the birthing canal, the cat will voluntarily contract and push the kitten out, you may see the mother strain.
- Once a kitten is born, mom will likely clean them of the inner membrane, chew their umbilical cord, and nurse them. The placenta or after birth will come subsequently after the birth of the kitten. Make sure you have an equal amount of kittens to afterbirths in order to make sure no placenta are
- Intervals between kittens range from 10 mins to an hour.
- If she is not attending to puppies or is having them too quickly to attend to each, you will need to step in!
 - Break any sacs surrounding kittens ASAP
 - Make sure they are breathing. If they have a hard time breathing or she is not cleaning them, use a bulb syringe to clear the airways. If they are not crying and wiggling, rub them and continue to bulb syringe until they are. Tilt the kittens head lower than its body so gravity aids the clearing of airways.
 - If mom has not chewed the umbilical cord within 5-10 minutes, tie a piece of dental floss very tightly around the cord about 2-3 inches from the kittens' body. Cut the cord on the side opposite of the kittens' body. Be careful not to pull on the umbilical cord as umbilical hernations are possible.
 - Place with mom to allow nursing, making sure they latch
 - Place heating pads along the nest under blankets or towels to aid as a heat source.
 - If any kitten is inactive or seems to have trouble breathing after bulb syringe, contact the emergency foster phone or bring the group to LHS.
 - If a kitten feels cool to the touch warm them up

Seek Immediate Medical Attention or Emergency Foster Number if:

- Active labor (start of contractions) and no kittens are born within 24 hours.
- Active intensive labor does not produce a kitten within-20-30 mins, or 10 mins if the fetus can be seen in the birthing canal or vulva. Kittens could be stuck, do not pull on the fetus! This may cause the queen more pain.
- Queen is depressed, lethargic or has a fever of 103 or higher.
- Queen loses fresh blood for more than 10 mins.
- More kittens are birthed than placenta, meaning one has been retained. Do not pull on afterbirth.

**For Emergencies~
9 am to 5 pm daily~ Bring the pet directly to LHS
AFTER HOURS CALL~ 434-473-1383**

Questions concerning fostering, email foster@lynchburghumane.org

National Kitten Coalition (Producer). (2020). *Pregnancy and Birth- Caring for Pregnant and Nursing Cats and their Kittens* [video webinar] Retrieved from <https://kittencoalition.org/programs/webinars/>

Raposa, K & Erdle, R (Author) (2020) Dog Pregnancy and Labor Tip Sheet. Lynchburg Humane Society

Williams, K., & Ward, E. (n.d.). Pregnancy and Parturition in Cats. Retrieved from <https://vcahospitals.com/know-your-pet/pregnancy-and-parturition-in-cats>