



Fostering a Pregnant Cat

PREPARATION

A couple of weeks before your cat is to deliver, you'll want to prepare a "queening box" – a safe & secure place for her to deliver & care for her kittens. The cat should be isolated in a quiet area to get used to her surroundings and to feel safe and secure. It is normal for her to be aggressive if she feels threatened in any way (e.g., loud noises, other animals, children, unfamiliar people, etc.). A toothpaste-like white discharge is normal, and is a sign that she is close to birthing.

Pregnant cats should eat up to 4x their normal amounts and can benefit greatly from kitten food.

Recommended supplies:

- Box – a plastic tub big enough for the queen to lie down and stretch out, such as a "Roughneck" tub, new litter box, laundry basket (holes covered), or cardboard box.
- Blankets & towels
- Kitten food – she should have access to food at all times
- Litter box

Setup Options:

- Line box with blankets or towels
- Optionally, place blankets over the top of part of the box, like a "ceiling" with room to escape if necessary.
- Place cat with box in a bathroom or small room with some light.
- You can even put the box in a bathtub, if using a bathroom, but be sure to cover the drain.
- Have heating pad only under blankets on one side of the box – the queen may be too warm if she has no other place to cool off.

Medical Emergencies:

- **Vaginal bleeding** during pregnancy is not normal and suggests that she is aborting the litter. If this is occurring late in pregnancy (the 8th week) she may be delivering the litter prematurely and a cesarean section is likely necessary.
- **Greenish, foul-smelling discharge**

Additional Resources:

- <http://www.petplace.com/cats/preparing-a-queening-box-for-your-cat/page1.aspx>

- <http://www.veterinarypartner.com/Content.plx?P=A&S=0&C=0&A=1738>
- Floral Essences from Elizabeth Quigg, 512-445-2426, sirisage@earthlink.net, <http://www.sirisage.com/> - for extremely stressed or aggressive cats, this could be a good option.
- <http://www.peteducation.com/article.cfm?c=1+1366&aid=919>

Note: The queen may ignore the box until it's time for labor, but give her a few days to get used to the surroundings.

LABOR

Several hours (and perhaps a whole day) of restlessness, grooming, nesting, pacing, panting, vomiting, and crying indicates that labor has begun. The queen will purr during labor and when feeding. When labor begins, there will be some brownish fluids, but very little blood. Babies can be born head first or breach and will be delivered in a sack, which usually breaks during birth. The queen will almost immediately begin cleaning the kitten to further release it from the sack. At this point, the kitten is still attached to the placenta, which will be passed after a few minutes.

Once the placenta is passed, the mother will bite the umbilical cord to cut it. The umbilical is a thin, whitish colored membrane. Usually, the mother will then eat the placenta.

Kittens that are born still completely in the sack need immediate help. If the mother does not open the sack and begin cleaning the kitten, it is up to you to help. Tear the membrane of the sack and begin cleaning and rubbing the kitten with a clean dry towel. You may have to clean other kittens if the mother is not showing much interest in her newborns. Tie off the umbilical cord about 1 inch from the belly wall using string, thread or dental floss. Cut the cord off on the other side of the tie. Clean and rub the kitten gently but vigorously until you hear crying. Place the kitten back with the new mom and make sure she allows her kittens to nurse.

Kittens are usually born every 10 minutes to 1 hour; however, if the queen feels threatened in any way she may delay further delivery for up to a day and may move to another location and/or abandon her newborns. Because of this, it is best to not change the bedding for a full day to ensure all babies have been born.

If any kitten is born dead, the mother may eat it, so remove it from the queening box if possible.

Once kittens are born and she is nursing, she may like some food which can be placed near her head so she can eat without disrupting the kittens.

Recommended Supplies:

- Clean towels

- Insulated Heating pad on low, if not already in queening box
- APA! Emergency telephone number on hand

Additional Resources:

- <http://www.veterinarypartner.com/Content.plx?P=A&S=0&C=0&A=1738>
- <http://www.petplace.com/cats/normal-labor-and-delivery-in-the-cat/page1.aspx>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgnIlqBZ6Ew>
- <http://www.cat-pregnancy-report.com/cat-video.html>

Medical Emergencies:

- If at any point you see a **red protruding membrane (like an earthworm)** from the kitten's belly, this is actually intestine & is a medical emergency
- **Dystocia** - Intense contractions for 60 minutes without a birth
- **Retained Placenta** – if the placenta is not passed, it can cause infection

CARING FOR NEW MOM & KITTENS

It is possible that the new mother will want to move her kittens frequently. This is okay, as long as there is always a heating source for the kittens to get to and the area is not drafty. More than likely, she is doing this in an effort to keep them safe. If the kittens move around a lot it means they are probably cold and trying to find a warm place.

Recommended Supplies:

- Secluded location, such as a bathroom or guest room
- Large crate (e.g., 48") so you can fit the box for kittens, food, litter box, and resting area for mother. Line the edges of the crate with blankets & towels because babies can escape or get caught in the crate edges.
- Box for kittens with sides high enough they cannot escape
- Clean bedding, as needed
- Heating source under blanket in half of the kitten box
- Kitten food & water for mother (keep water away from nest so that if kittens escape, they don't end up in the water bowl) – she should have access to food at all times
- Scale for weighing kittens
- Kitten formula, such as KMR, if mother appears to not be feeding the kittens

Medical Emergencies:

- **Bloody (red) or pus-like vaginal discharge** from mother
- **Kittens are not being nursed** and are not gaining weight (each should gain 7-10g per day)
- **Kittens are constantly moved or kept away from heating source**
- **Mother is not eating**

WEANING

Starting at 4-5 weeks, kittens will need to start learning how to eat and drink on their own. They will also start needing to learn how to use the litter box.

Recommended Supplies:

- Shallow food dish or saucer
- Royal Canin Babycat kitten chow
- Canned kitten food
- Shallow baking dish or aluminum baking pan
- Shredded newspaper or non-clumping clay cat litter

Fill the shallow dish or saucer with Babycat soaked with a bit of water so that it is soft. Have this available for the kittens at all times. On a separate dish, blend some canned kitten food with water to make gruel (should have a watery/soupy consistency). Feed the kittens gruel 2-3 times per day. They will walk through it and be quite messy, so be sure to place a towel or a puppy pad underneath them and their dish.

The importance of the shredded newspaper or non-clumping cat litter becomes obvious with how messy the kittens get eating gruel. It's during this development phase that kittens also start grooming themselves, and potentially their litter mates, and you don't want them ingesting clumping cat litter.

Be prepared for a few accidents!