

## So Your Cat Is Going To Have Kittens.

We all know that cats are completely different to dogs in many ways. Even their reproduction cycles are dramatically different.

Cats cycle seasonally – so when days get longer and nights shorter, cats go into heat. That explains the episodes of never ending blood chilling screams in August.



Cats on heat can be quite funny – they roll and call and can become extremely affectionate. A female cat – also known as a queen – will stay on heat until a tom cat (a male cat) has mated with her. Once she is mated, she will go off heat and if she conceived, she will then be pregnant for 9 weeks.

### How do I know if she is preparing to queen (give birth)?

In the last week of pregnancy, she may show mammary development, and later on, even milk production.

Cats will look for a comfortable, quiet spot to have their kittens in the last 7 days of their pregnancy. Cupboards and laundry baskets are popular for this. If you provide them with a good spot that everyone is happy with, you are less likely to wake up to a wet mess on your bed one night.



Although you can use rectal temperatures in dogs to estimate the beginning of labour, this method is less reliable in cats.

### What can I expect?

Like in dogs, a queen's water will break to lubricate the birth canal for the kittens to pass through. A cat can stop their labour at any time if disturbed. If undisturbed, this process will run smoothly and your cat will probably have a normal birth.



Caesarean sections are rarely needed by cats, except occasionally in certain breeds like Persians. Queening is not as drawn out as a dog's whelping is. The process of giving birth to a litter of 4 or more kittens should not take more than 6 hours.

### When do I panic?

If the queen has been in active labour for 60 minutes or more without giving birth to any kittens, your vet will need to intervene.

Any profuse bleeding from the vulva indicates a problem. Cats abort more frequently than dogs, and bleeding like this is usually the first sign.

### We have kittens – what now?

Here is the whole secret about cats – They can, and do, go on heat again while nursing their kittens AND fall pregnant again before their kittens are weaned. This happens when the kittens are 6-8 weeks old. Unlike dogs that cycle twice per year (on average – irrelevant of season), cats cycle through the entire summer season in this way. You can just imagine how many kittens one queen can produce!

Have your cat sterilised before this vicious cycle can begin!

