

VETERINARY

Q: Dear Dr. Morris
Our 3-year-old Boxer
"Brandy" is pregnant, we are
all very excited. Since this is the
first time we have had one of
our dogs have puppies we need
to know what to expect, how
long is the pregnancy and what
kind of prenatal care does she
need?



Jennifer Morris, VMD

A: A dog or cat pregnancy is approximately 63 days,
plus or minus 1 or 2 days.
As in human females, the term of the pregnancy can be
broken into trimesters. Each trimester is 3 weeks long.
The first trimester is the term of embryonic development.
Exposure to toxins and pesticides should be avoided. At
the end of the first trimester it is sometimes possible for a
Veterinarian to feel the embryos upon examination.

The second trimester is a rapid growth phase. At four weeks
an ultrasound can be performed to determine fetal viability.
In the third trimester, the puppies/kittens are finishing
development. Bones will develop after 42 days and can be
seen on an x-ray to determine the number in the litter. It is
during this trimester and while the puppies and kittens are
nursing that we recommend feeding "Mom" puppy food.
Like women, weight gain in the first two trimesters should
be controlled. No real food changes in type or amount are
necessary. In the last trimester, mammary glands may start
to enlarge.

When a dog is ready to give birth, she will show signs of
nesting. This means that she will find a place to birth her
puppies. Usually, a baby pool or whelping box with a towel
or bedding works great as a maternity bed. Within 24 hours
after birthing, a dog's rectal temperature can go down to 97
degrees. However, if a fever is present (over 102 degrees),
you should contact your Veterinarian immediately.
Congratulations to your family and to Brandy!!

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Setting the Standard of Care
William Griffin, VMD • Christopher Lindquist, VMD
Jennifer Morris, VMD • Stanley Sigel, VMD
4250 Black Horse Pike, Rte. 42
Turnersville, NJ 08012

(856) 728-1400

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