



QUEENING

Cats become sexually mature at six months of age. Normally there is no vaginal discharge. The signs of heat are howling, wanting to go outside, and lifting the hindquarters in the air. If there is a discharge, inflammation, or swelling, a veterinarian should be consulted promptly. Cats' cycles don't have set intervals, and the length of the heat varies. Generally, most cats in our area cycle about every three weeks, from late January through early October. It is important to remember that a nursing cat with a litter of kittens will continue with normal heat cycles.

The gestation period is approximately sixty-three days. It is advisable to protect your cat from anything upsetting. When handling your cat, make sure to support the whole body. Do not pull them from the shoulders. Try to keep her as quiet as possible and away from other cats in the household. She must also be protected from jumping down from great heights.

Provide a safe secluded place for her to have her kittens. If she isn't happy with the place you have picked for her, she will carry them to a place that she thinks is better suited. A closet is a good choice because cats usually prefer darkness.

Most kittens are born quite easily. The normal interval between kittens is fifteen to thirty minutes. If a cat is in labor for several hours or seems to be having difficulty delivering, contact a veterinarian. Cats will usually cut the umbilical cord themselves and eat the placenta.

After the kittens are born, keep them and the queen in a quiet and private place. Distraction can cause the queen confusion and lead to complications. After a normal birth, there is a bright red, odorless discharge for several days. If it is dark in color, or has an odor, contact your veterinarian.

Some cats appear to have little or no milk the first week. Watch the kittens closely to make sure each one is getting adequate food. Help the late arrivals, for they may have a hard time nursing at first. If the mother has insufficient milk, hand feeding may be necessary. A good diet for the mother is important during both pregnancy and the nursing period. We recommend feeding a high quality diet to the mother and kittens until the kittens are six to eight weeks of age.