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Whelping and Dystocia: Maximizing Success of Medical Management

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Abstract

Dystocia can be defined broadly as "difficult birth" or more specifically as difficulty in the bitch expelling the pups through the cervix, vagina, and vestibule. It is a fairly common emergency presented to the small animal practitioner with an incidence rate of approximately 5%. The incidence of dystocia is highest in toy and brachycephalic breeds, and occurs frequently in small litters (< 3 pups) due to fetal oversize and delayed onset of labor. As duration of labor progresses, the mortality of the pups and even the bitch increases, with the highest number of stillborn pups occurring after six hours from the time of active parturition. Practitioners should understand the mechanism of normal parturition so that abnormalities can be readily identified

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