

Can a Cat Get Pregnant While Still Nursing Kittens?

CatChannel veterinary expert, Arnold Plotnick, DVM, discusses feline fertility.

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Posted: August 15, 2008 2 a.m. EDT

Q: Can a cat get pregnant while still nursing kittens?

A: Yes. Lactation (production of milk) does not suppress the heat cycle, and cats that are actively nursing kittens can go into heat as soon as two weeks after giving birth.

Some aspects of a cat's reproductive capabilities are truly remarkable. Did you know that even being pregnant doesn't necessarily suppress the heat cycle in cats! In fact, 10 percent of female cats go into heat between the third and sixth week of pregnancy. Although these cycles are rarely fertile, it actually is possible for a cat to be carrying fetuses of different ages, resulting from separate matings in different heat cycles! The scientific term for this is "superfetation."

Also, a female cat in heat can mate with several males, and it is possible for kittens in a litter to have different fathers. The technical term for this is "superfecundation." Cats long have been recognized for their fertility. Bastet, the Egyptian goddess of fertility, is depicted as a cat in artwork, and the ancient Egyptians worshipped cats as a symbol of fertility. When it comes to making babies, cats are one of the most prolific domestic pets out there.