

Series: 1-002/1

Reproduction of the black-backed jackal

Mating

Black-backed jackals become sexually mature at 11 months, but in the wild, adults only start breeding between the ages of 2 and 3 years.

There is a long-term pair-bond between a mated pair of black-backed jackals, and each pair holds a breeding territory.

They breed only once a year. From September to April, males are not reproductively active, while December to March is the time when females are not reproductively active.

Mating season is usually from May to August. The time when a female comes in heat may depend on her age, body condition and local environmental conditions.

Whelping

After a pregnancy that lasts 60-70 days, females give birth in underground dens to litters ranging in size from 1 to 9, but there are usually 3 to 6 pups in a litter. This potentially high population turnover enables rapid recovery after population crashes (as caused by culling or disease epidemics, for example). Females usually give birth in August, but this may vary between regions. Births may occur from July to October, depending on habitat and food availability. In one study, it was observed that litters were larger at the start of whelping season compared to litters born later (towards August/September).

August to November is the time of year when females suckle the pups.

Pup development

Pups' eyes start opening when they are 8-10 days old.

By the age of 3 weeks, pups have all their "milk teeth", and the milk diet is gradually replaced with food regurgitated by adults. Although pups start emerging from the den at the age of 3 weeks, they still spend most of their time in the den up to the age of 7 weeks.

At the age of 3-4 months, permanent teeth start replacing the milk teeth. By this age, the

pups are weaned, no longer use a den, and begin to accompany the adults in search of food. At the age of 6-12 months, all milk teeth have been replaced by permanent teeth. By this age, they are more mobile and capable of hunting on their own. The age of black-backed jackals can be determined by body weight, head and body measurements, combined with examining the teeth.

Young Black-backed jackals usually stay close to their den up to the age of six months. After this age, they may stay with the parents as helpers or disperse to establish their own territories.

Pup care and survival

The male and the female of a mated pair share parenting duties (feeding and guarding pups) equally.

Pup survival depends on food availability. It has been observed that an average of two pups from a litter survive to maturity.

Helpers increase pup survival by regurgitating to the mother during the period in which she suckles the pups, and by feeding pups and helping to guard them while the parents are away. Pups are also fed by regurgitating to them. Helpers also play, groom and help teach the pups to hunt. The experience gained by acting as helpers may, in turn, increase survival of a black-backed jackal's own pups once it finds a mate and starts breeding.

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Consult your local DEFF (environmental affairs) or DARDLR (department of agriculture) office for legal aspects regarding predation management

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