

ON HEAT

The “heat”/ in season

This is the period in which an entire (not desexed) female dog (bitch) ovulates, allowing conception. It is associated with a number of physical and behavioural changes. A bitch will usually first come in season at 6 to 9 months of age, and will continue to cycle approximately every 6 months.

A typical cycle is as follows:

- A bloody discharge and swollen vulva is common in the proestrus phase. The bitch may be more vocal, lick herself more and urinate more often. This lasts 9 days on average.
- A shift in hormones then occurs to allow ovulation and a shift to the oestrus/fertile phase of the cycle. The exact window in which the bitch is fertile can be difficult to determine without blood testing and vaginal swabs. The bitch is fertile (can fall pregnant) for an average of 9 days after ovulation. In this time her vaginal discharge will usually become clear/straw-coloured, her vulva may become more swollen and she will be receptive to mating.
- If mating is not desired, it is important to keep the bitch away from entire male dogs for the entire duration of the heat period (approximately 9 days before ovulation and at least 9 days after ovulation). The bitch is more likely to escape and wander in search of male dogs during this time so secure confinement is necessary.

Misalliance – stopping an unwanted pregnancy

1. Desexing your bitch by removing her ovaries and uterus is the most reliable way to stop pregnancy and reduce the risk of mammary tumours and uterine infections occurring. Desexing can be performed to terminate an early pregnancy.
2. Alizin, a progesterone antagonist can be given in certain situations to terminate a pregnancy. A veterinary consultation is required to determine suitability and discuss what is involved with this.