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Understanding silent or skipped heat.

Knowing when your bitch is likely to come into heat is important for the breeder so that you can pre prepare the dog for the coming up breeding heat time.

Then you will now at the time that the dog are close to her heat cycle - **but** if things run late and ultimately, it seems as if she has not come into heat at all, you will know something is wrong.

While it is not impossible that a female dog will skip a season now and then, **there could be another possibilities - a silent or "dry" heat.**

A silent heat is when the bitch goes through her season, but it is virtually asymptomatic, and does not come accompanied by the normal signs of heat, such as changes in behaviour, physical changes, and the urge to breed.

As breeder it is wise to make yourself aware of the possibility of a silent heat, the potential causes for it, and how to identify it, so that you can be aware of it.

The lack of the normal symptoms of a season.

How each bitch behaves and shows symptoms of her season can vary from dog to dog and case to case; in some it is obvious and very pronounced, while in others, it can be hard to tell, even if the bitch is going through a genuine season.

Some bitches **do not** change in behaviour or temperament during their heat cycle at all, and may have only **a very light (on no detectable) discharge with little to no swelling of the vulva** ... this is perfectly normal for some bitches. This does not mean that your bitch is necessarily going through a silent heat, but simply that her seasons are very asymptomatic and also the dog is cleaning up very well herself.

Reactions to male dogs.

Then even when you are not aware that your bitch is in season because the effects of it are very muted, if your bitch **could be** indeed in season ... male dogs in the locality will very much be aware of it and tell you with no uncertain terms by displaying a heightened level of sexual interest in her ... then be aware that the chances are that she is in heat, but that you are simply not aware of it. If this is not the case, then a silent heat might be the reason.

Silent heat or skipped heat?

It is important to differentiate between a silent heat and a skipped heat cycle, and both instances are equally likely to happen and might add to the confusion!

Your bitch may potentially be more likely to miss a heat cycle if she has one of a certain set of medical conditions, such as ypoadrenocorticism, hyperadrenocorticism, or hypothyroidism,

so if your bitch **does miss a heat cycle** and displays any other symptoms, it is worth getting her checked out by the vet just in case.

Bitches that are underweight or very thin, or that have recently lost a reasonable amount of weight may also be apt to miss a heat cycle altogether, which is also worth bearing in mind.

Fat and obese bitches on the other hand is also inclined to skip a heat.

While the vast majority of female dog breeds and types are apt to come into season regularly every six or seven months, some individual breeds are known to only come into season around **once a year on average**.

Veterinary testing.

If you suspect that your bitch has skipped a heat cycle or might have been going through a silent heat, it is well worth getting your vet to investigate – this in order to rule out any underlying problems. Your vet can run hormone tests on your bitch's progesterone levels, in order to find out if they have missed a season or are going through a silent heat, in order to build up a complete picture of what is happening.

Inducing a season – to bring on a heat.

{See articles on this website regarding inducing heat}

Often some bitch dogs (in a kennel), or housed together will come into season around the same time, and housing a bitch that is apt to skip a season with another bitch in heat can actually serve to induce the heat cycle in the other bitch, should this be appropriate.

This is not an exact science, but this process is often used by professional dog breeders to bring a bitch into season for breeding if she appears to be late in her heat cycle or about to miss a season – or by placing such a bitch dog in the kennel of the dog that you mated and relocated.

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Bitches in season - The top ten most frequently asked questions Can you prevent an unsprayed female dog from coming into season?

Prevent your female from coming into season.

While everyone of course loves puppies, it is vital to ensure that you do not breed from your bitch without good reasons, and have ready and waiting good homes for the potential puppies that your bitch might produce. Even if you are really careful about keeping your bitch away from male dogs when she is in season, accidents can happen, and every year, thousands of unwanted puppies are born due to accidents or a lack of good supervision.

If your bitch is not spayed and you have good reasons for not spaying her or plans to breed her for all the right reasons at a later point, dealing with your dog's regular heat cycles can be a challenge.

While most of us are aware of the wide range of methods of contraception that are available to people, such as the pill, implant and barrier methods, for your bitch dog, life is not so easy!

Bitches and their heat cycles.

When a female dog reaches the onset of adolescence and maturity, she will go through her first oestrus cycle (every heat cycle process can take up to three weeks to complete, during which time, your bitch will be capable of conceiving a litter) The coming into heat indicates that the dog is physically able to conceive.

Realize after the first season is completed (and you might have kept her away from breeding) she will come into season again in +/- 6 months.

This is the time for you to prepare her for a breeding on the next heat cycle – all needed vaccinations – blood and other tests – worming's – nutrition – planned Sire of your choice – and TLC.

Spaying to prevent your bitch coming into season.

The traditional and most common method of preventing your bitch from coming into season ever again is to have her spayed.

{First read article about spaying on this website before you make a decision}.

Spaying is an oviduct-hysterectomy operation, which removes both of the bitch's ovaries and so, her ability to breed. This in turn stops the bitch from going through the normal heat cycles, and the hormonal changes that come with the heat cycles are also negated.

"Some" believe that spaying is the most common method of preventing seasons in the bitch, and that it also "might" help to protect the bitch against problems such as ovarian cancers in later life.

Canine contraception?

While "some" vets usually recommend spaying first and foremost, this is not the only method available to vets to help you to prevent your bitch from coming into season.

Canine contraceptives are also available, which are designed to **prevent or pause** the oestrus cycle that leads to a season, and so, removes the opportunity to breed. The canine contraceptive is administered in the form of a long-acting injection of a particular hormone, usually either Proligesterone or Delvosteron, which prevents the ovaries from releasing an egg or from an egg implanting in the lining of the womb.

However, the contraceptive injection is not a one-off treatment, and will require regular repeats for as long as you wish to prevent your bitch from coming into season for.

An initial injection is administered, with a second shot given after three months and a third shot given four months after that.

After this time, if you still wish to prevent your bitch from breeding, regular injections need to be scheduled for five-monthly intervals.

Currently, this is the only regular method available to dog owners to prevent the oestrus cycle without spaying, however, hormonal implants that can also suspend the heat cycle are currently being researched. As with any procedure that requires the administration of hormones or medications to your dog, the contraceptive injection is not without some risks of its own.

Dogs that undergo hormonal control for their seasons are found to have a slightly elevated risk rate for the incidence of "pyometras", and "some believe" some health benefits that come from spaying, such as reduction in the incidence rate of ovarian cancers, are negated.

Note! >> Added to this, if your bitch has been receiving hormonal contraception injections for some time, particularly over a year, it can mean that it will take some time for their natural cycle to return to normal, restoring their ability to reproduce.

If you intend to use contraceptive injections as a temporary measure to keep your bitch from coming into season but later wish to breed from them, then try to ensure that your bitch does not receive shots for more than a year if possible, and stop administering the injection at least a few months before you intend to breed from her.