

BBC: Programme: January 2002.

Aids to easy mating

First, both dog and bitch should be mature, in good condition, free of parasites and infections. Especially they should be proven free of brucellosis.

The bitch's heat, or season, normally lasts for some twenty-one days and she should be segregated for this time. The first stage, seven to ten days, is characterised by swelling of the vulva, her external sex organ and discharge from her vagina. Classically, it starts as a dark red flow and progresses to a pink, or creamy one, when she's ready to mate.

However, there is great variety. Some bitch's discharge is so scanty that their first day is hard to establish; others have a dark, bloody flow for three weeks ... its not the most reliable timer.

Behaviour is a better guide. For the pre-receptive period the bitch is not interested in males although they are greatly interested in her. She may even attack suitors. Once she is receptive (from 7-10 days in the season) she will act coyly with the male, nuzzling him and, eventually standing stiff legged, thrusting her pelvis out, turning her tail aside (flagging) and raising her vulva and will permit mating.

This is the beginning of the second stage which ends as her receptiveness ceases, sometimes abruptly. This is followed by the third stage, breeding may still be possible but the season wanes. Segregation from males should be maintained.

There are bitches that never would permit mating unless restrained; a stocking muzzle becomes appropriate for the male's safety. A young stud may be permanently opposed to copulation after such a reception.

Some fore-play is certainly permissible and interference by owners can be overdone. Once mounting by the male is permitted and entry made to her vagina by his penis it swells greatly and initiates the tie. It can be helpful to them to gently place the male's foreleg beside his other one and then help him raise his back leg over the bitch so that they stand rear to rear. The bitch should be restrained from dragging him around while all parties await the natural end to the tie. The tie exists since the dog does not store semen but produces it during mating.

Young males should not be discouraged from mounting efforts; they're learning skills and frequent corrections may cause them to be loath to breed as adults.

Our breeders are invited to share their expertise with us, especially in judging timing and managing reluctant participants.

Recommended reading.

Practical Dog Breeding & Genetics. Eleanor Frankling. Pub. Pure Bred Dogs. ?? in print.