



CDTS
Cranbourne Dog
Training School

"Positively the best- for you and your dog"

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UNDERSTANDING YOUR FEMALE DOG

Female dogs reach sexual maturity at different times, with small breeds attaining it quicker than the bigger ones. A dog's first season or heat, and the accompanying vaginal bleeding can occur anytime from between six months to twenty four months, although most dogs come into season for the first time before reaching their first birthday.

Don't panic if your female pup gets to her first birthday without showing signs of being in heat. You may have missed it. Some dogs bleed very little, or they keep themselves especially clean. Chances are if you have a male dog in your house or neighbourhood you **will know** when your female is in heat!

Talk to your breeder about the age when most of her females come into season. If nothing has happened by the time you go in to get your females annual vaccinations, make a note to discuss the matter with your vet.

Females come into season for approximately 21 to 30 days every five to seven months. Her heat may begin at the first sign of bleeding but equally may start with licking around the genitalia. The season ends when she loses interest in breeding. In general, although not set in stone, the first 5 – 9 days of your female's season will be bleeding with an enlarged vulva. From then on she will have a clear discharge, this is when the hormone level changes and the female is now ovulating, it is particularly during this time that you need to be careful, at approximately days 9 – 15. Your female is now fertile and will actively try and find a mate and all of the neighbourhood male dogs will be trying to seek her affections. She may sweep her tail to the side of her body to try and attract males to pay attention. **DO NOT** walk your female off the lead when she is in season and avoid areas where there may be other dogs as much as possible.

If for any reason a male dog 'catches' your female and you see the two dogs mating, **DO NOT** pull them apart! Firstly the male dog is extremely likely to bite you to get you away from his female and secondly if the dogs have already 'tied' together, you will tear the female badly inside if you pull the male out of her. Wait until the deed is done and then take your female to the vet that day and discuss the anti-mate injection, which is like the morning after pill.

It is advisable to give your female a bath after her season to take away all the hormonal smells which may still attract male dogs.



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SPAYING A FEMALE

In an ideal world, we would suggest allowing your female to have at least her first season, this is to ensure that the vulva is properly formed, and also to help her mature emotionally. It also lessens the likelihood of thyroid problems and hip, joint and ligament issues. If you have decided to have her spayed this is best done 3 months after a season, so as to allow the hormones to settle.

Spaying may not be beneficial if you have a very timid dog as it may make the behaviour worse. Please also consider how this might alter house dynamics if you have a multi-female house. If in doubt, speak to a qualified behaviourist before making this decision.

Spaying may involve the removal of the female's entire reproductive system. The uterus, fallopian tubes and ovaries are taken out through an incision in the abdomen. Your female will have stitches in for 10 days following the procedure, and she will need to be taken back to the vet to have these removed (some vets now glue the wound together, or use dissolvable stitches so there is nothing to remove, but your dog will still need to be checked on). Recovery is fast, taking just a few days, during which you should limit her activities ie no jumping or boisterous play. Most owners notice very little difference in their female's personality. Your other option is you can ask for a laparoscopic spay (not all vets offer this procedure) which involves just removing the ovaries which is more expensive but is basically keyhole surgery so wound size is smaller and recovery is much quicker.

The benefits of having your female spayed are that she -

- Is safe from mammary tumours
- Is protected from other cancers of the reproductive system
- Will not develop pyometra, a life-threatening infection of the uterus
- Will not spot your carpets with the twice-yearly mess caused by the vaginal bleeding of a dog in season
- Will not attract male callers