



## **Bitches in Season**

This advice sheet is intended as a guide for owners of bitches, who have questions about seasons. It is not a guide for neutering or breeding; this would need to be discussed with a qualified veterinary surgeon.

Bitches typically have their first season any time between 6 – 12months, but this is just a guide. For larger breeds it is often much later. Most dogs have a season every 6 months, but a few dogs only have one a year. Dogs do not experience the menopause so continue to have seasons throughout their lives. Pregnancy is possible from the bitches first season. Although young and older dogs (over 7 years) are fertile, this does not indicate that they are appropriate for breeding at these stages in their life.

Before a season it is common for bitches to behave a little differently to usual. Some go off their food, scent mark, (e.g. urinate frequently when on walks), poor recall or generally behave differently. Some bitches experience abdomen pain which can affect their mood.

When your bitch is in season, the vulva will swell up and she will lose some blood stained fluid. Typically the season lasts for 3 weeks, but it can be shorter or longer than this particularly if it is the dog's first season. They are at their fertile at around Day 8 - Day 15.

When your bitch is in season, it is important to ensure that there are no unwanted pregnancies and that she does not receive unwanted attention from male dogs, which may cause her distress. Keep her on lead if you take her out to relieve herself. Avoid places that are commonly used by other dog walkers. Bitches can sometimes be aggressive to male dogs if they try to mate them at the wrong time in her season.

Bitches in season have a strong effect on male dog's behaviour, and even a well trained male dog can sometimes be difficult to handle around bitches in season, particularly if they have already been used as stud. If your neighbour has a male dog it may be worth letting them know so that they can supervise him if he is using the garden, or so you can plan outside time so that the dogs are using their gardens at different times. Male dogs can detect a bitch in season from very far away, and some will break out or in to gardens etc. to get to them. Some male dogs will vocalise their eagerness too!

You may wish to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of spaying your bitch with your vet, both for health reasons and to avoid unwanted puppies.

## **Phantom Pregnancy**

Phantom, false or pseudo pregnancy can sometimes happen after the season around the time that the dog would have given birth. The bitch may gain weight, have mammary gland development, produce milk or experience behaviour changes, e.g. nesting, agitation, aggression to people or other dogs. If your dog displays these behaviours discuss them with your vet. It is important to ensure that the bitch is not actually pregnant before treatment commence.

Useful link:

[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_4557874\\_tell-dog-having-false-pregnancy.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_4557874_tell-dog-having-false-pregnancy.html)