

### Mating your bitch

AN 12

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The first consideration prior to mating your bitch is whether she is suitable or not and whether the stud dog selected is suitable for her. It is therefore essential that you plan your programme well in advance of the intended time of mating, and that you have a back up stud dog available for added security.

When dealing with a maiden bitch you should only use an experienced, proven, stud dog. We strongly recommend against using an inexperienced untested mate for two reasons, firstly their combined lack of skills creates their own problems and secondly if she doesn't produce puppies you won't know where to start looking for the cause of the problem.

As far as the age of the bitch is concerned we would first of all draw your attention to KUSA's position. Except when there are extenuating circumstances they will not register a litter whelped within 12 months of the DOB of the dam. From our point of view we advise against mating a bitch before she is 12 months old, that is we operate to a minimum age 2 months older than KUSA. However we also recommend that you mate her not before the second heat and then only if she is physically mature. Generally she will be 15 months old at this stage resulting in the pups being whelped at 17 months, which is as early as we find generally acceptable. There is however the problem of reducing fertility, and mating a maiden bitch too late on the other hand can contribute to this problem. You must also consider her age when having her x-rayed for HD purposes (refer AN 1) and please remember that we recommend that you do not x-ray her within the two months either before or after heat.

You therefore observe her first heat carefully, from when (a) it starts (the first sign of a strong blood coloured discharge) to when (b) she is ready for mating (a clear discharge approx 12th day). This knowledge will facilitate the actual mating approx six months later. However please remember that we have heard of bitches mating successfully on the 2nd and 22nd days, so ensuring that your bitch is or is not pregnant is anything but an exact science.

Assuming that you are a first time breeder and have a maiden bitch which is following normally accepted time scales we suggest that you introduce the intended dam and sire to each other on the 6th day. As the stud you are using is experienced presumably the person bringing him also knows what must be done. If not make sure that there will be someone there who does. It is a good idea to make use of a well fenced area of at least half rugby field size for this purpose. Keep putting them together as frequently as you feel is necessary (say every second day) bearing in mind whatever arrangements have been made in terms of the Stud Agreement (refer AN10). By the 12th day at least their intentions should have become more definite (possibly 10th) and you should be prepared to bring one or both under full control (put on lead). Once you have determined the pattern your bitch follows subsequent matings will be much simpler, and remember that many breeders rely on only one tie (KUSA makes provision on the litter registration form for two) and that your bitch will continue to accept the male until her heat is over.

There is then the issue of the difficult bitch, that is one which does not wish to be mated, and which will not allow the stud dog to approach even though apparently on heat. Generally speaking it is advisable not to persevere without finding out the reason probably by consulting your vet. Physical and/or abnormal temperament/hormone problems usually cause this difficulty, and the chances are that she should not be used for breeding purposes as the progeny can be possessed of similar problems. We also recommend that you do not AI a bitch unless she has produced a litter through a normal mating. Professional mating services can also prove an invaluable help in many cases.

You should miss a heat after each litter (ie not have more than one litter per year), and have your bitch checked out by a vet when she is five or more years old prior to each mating (refer AN8, section i.9.)

Contact your Committee for further information if in doubt. We have several very experienced breeders who can share their expertise with you, and this complex subject can not be covered adequately in one brief page. Plan all your moves well in advance and make full use of the facilities available to you.