



TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL BREEDING

Presented to the Old English Sheepdog Club
October 11, 2011, Hickory NC

1. **Plan ahead!** Get your ducks in a row with respect to pedigree analysis, clearances, thyroid, fecal and heartworm negative, bitch in "tip top" shape.
2. **Choose wisely.** Avoid a "Garbage in, garbage out" breeding. Confirm that the male is currently fertile and in good health. Confirm that the dog will be "ready, willing and able" to provide the necessary services when the time comes. If shipping semen, confirm that he can be collected and that he "ships well." Make sure male is not overbooked when you are likely to need him.
3. **Have a Plan B**
4. **Brucellosis testing**
5. **Don't scrimp on the "front end" breeding management.**

Ovulation Timing

There is an art to the science of ovulation timing (OVT) in the canine. Unlike other species in which ovulation occurs in an estrogen environment, ovulation in the canine occurs only after progesterone levels have risen to >4ng/ml. Another unique feature is that the bitch ovulates ova in the primary oocyte stage. These primary oocytes must undergo another meiotic division and further maturation before they become secondary oocytes and can be fertilized. Unlike most species in which breeding/insemination is timed to coincide with ovulation, insemination in the bitch is performed 2 to 4 days after ovulation. It is important to remember that, in the bitch, the critical timing events occur 4 to 6 days *before* the optimal breeding dates.

1. **Work with a veterinarian who knows what he or she is doing.** To find a board certified theriogenologist, go to www.theriogenology.org. To search for a general practitioner who has an interest in reproduction and has joined the Society for Theriogenology, go to www.therio.org. For either site, click on "Find a Member." Search by last name or state.
2. **Use all available tools.** Exfoliative vaginal cytology, vaginoscopy, behavioral assessment, evaluation of external genitalia, LH & progesterone testing.
3. **Progesterone Testing**
 - Confirm with your veterinarian that his or her commercial laboratory offers quantitative progesterone assays that are run daily with results reported back within 24 hours.
 - Avoid "fly by" progesterone testing. It matters how blood samples are handled.
 - Start testing on day 5, 6, or 7 from the onset of proestrus (unless you have a known early ovulating bitch).
 - Test every 2nd or 3rd day as necessary until ovulation is confirmed.
 - Test again at the time of breeding.
 - Baseline progesterone levels are <1.5ng/ml.
 - An *initial rise* occurs concomitantly with the LH surge (1.5-2.0 ng/ml).
 - Ovulation occurs when progesterone levels reach 5 to 6 ng/ml *under my management*.
4. **Optimal breeding times are day 2, 3, and 4 post ovulation.**
5. **Ovulation date, not breeding date(s), is the most accurate predictor of parturition date.**
6. **Parturition occurs 63 days ± 24 hrs after ovulation.**
7. **Avoid the temptation to attempt "long distance" breeding management.**

Thank you for the opportunity to talk to your group. I wish each of you success with your breeding programs. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if we can be of service to you. You have an open invitation to take the "fifty cent tour" of our hospital. [www.veterinaryspecialtiesatthelake.com]

Jane Barber DVM, MS, DACT