

NO PUPPIES?

A LOOK AT CAUSES OF INFERTILITY IN MALE DOGS

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When breeding dogs, there are factors in both the bitch and the dog that can affect fertility and conception. In the June issue, we discussed the factors that can cause decreased fertility and pregnancy concerns in the bitch. In this article, we will focus on infertility in the dog and what can be done to help minimize these concerns.

When deciding to use a dog to sire a litter, he should have a thorough exam of his reproductive tract. This exam should include palpation of the testes and prostate and visualization of the penis. Sometimes even internal ultrasound is needed to examine the deep structures.

Reasons for Male Dog Infertility in the Reproductive Tract

- Age-related (testicular atrophy)
- Heat stress
- Injuries to the testes

Evaluation of the testes can help determine cancer, undescended, or underdeveloped testes.

Reasons for Infertility in Dog Semen

The next step should be an evaluation of the semen. Semen collection and evaluation is the best correlation available to determine if a dog has the potential to be fertile. A semen collection should be performed prior to breeding. Through this collection, the motility (movement) and morphology (appearance) of the semen can be evaluated. These tests can be performed quickly with just the use of a microscope.

If semen is to be shipped or frozen, additional tests can be performed to evaluate its longevity. When deciding to freeze and store semen, it is important to consider the age of the dog. The semen of a young dog will likely be different than if that dog was collected and the semen frozen later in life.

Semen from younger dogs generally handles freezing/

thawing better. It is recommended that if there is any chance a dog will be used for stud and have a future value in a breeding program that he be collected at a young age. It is important to remember that semen evaluation is a sample that was collected in one moment in time and has no guarantee on future semen quality.

If after semen collection or through a failed breeding attempt, a dog is determined to be infertile then it is important to look at potential causes. Look at any medications or supplements that the dog is receiving. Some medications can be toxic to semen production.

Medical Reasons for Male Dog Infertility

There can also be medical causes for infertility. Prostatitis can be seen in older males. This is usually diagnosed via a rectal exam, urinalysis, ultrasound and sometimes culturing the prostatic fluid. Treatment of prostatitis generally requires antibiotics. As discussed in the bitch, brucellosis can also be found as a cause for infertility in the male. All males should be tested prior to breeding to prevent the spread of brucellosis.

If breeding does not result in a pregnancy, the bitch's status and ovulation timing must be taken into consideration. There is also potential that a stud dog may not physically be able to breed. This could be due to lack of desire/libido or pain-related (arthritis, back or orthopedic pain). Make sure the dog is not being overused. It has been shown that dogs that are ejaculated for as few as five days in a row can experience depletion in sperm count.

To help ensure your stud dog is sound for breeding, it is important to visit your veterinarian or a theriogenologist. They will perform a thorough exam and semen evaluation. Proper nutrition is also important. They can suggest supplements that may help to increase sperm production and quality. If everything looks good, then all that is needed is a healthy, ovulation-timed bitch that's ready for breeding!