

UNWANTED PREGNANCY

If you find that your bitch is pregnant or you suspect she is, and it wasn't planned, you do have options.

1. Care for her appropriately and let her have the pups
2. Have her desexed (if the pregnancy isn't too far advanced)
3. Have her aborted (again if the pregnancy isn't too far advanced)

The first step is to determine when the bitch was on heat and when she was or may have been mated if possible. Having this information is essential to planning the best options for your dog. Next step is to confirm that she is indeed pregnant. In reality, if these dates are unknown, determining how far pregnant your bitch is, is very difficult. The only option is having a very experienced clinician ultrasound her and measure the fetuses which can then give some idea as to the fetal age.

Pregnancy less than three weeks is hard to confirm. A blood test which can be done in the clinic to detect **RELAXIN** hormone can confirm pregnancy from three weeks post mating but if a negative test result occurs, it is recommended to repeat the test a week later to confirm either way.

Ultrasound is commonly used at four weeks to confirm pregnancy. X-ray is used late in pregnancy to count pups which can then be helpful when planning the delivery. X-ray can not be used earlier in pregnancy as the fetal bones have not ossified and will not show.

DESEXING

If you are interested in desexing your bitch, this can be done safely until five weeks post mating. After this stage, extra care is required to support her during the procedure. The anaesthetic risk will increase due to the time needed to complete the surgery and the degree of blood loss due to the much larger volume of circulating blood in the pregnant uterus. We are extremely reluctant to desex animals further developed than seven weeks pregnant.

Bitches desexed whilst pregnant can still have mammary development initially and require considerable aftercare. Strict rest and confinement is essential for 10 days. The incision/wound must be cared for appropriately, kept clean and dry and your

dog may be prescribed medication to have during her recovery period.

ABORTION

Pregnant dogs can be aborted using a product called ALIZIN. Whilst it is registered for use in dogs as far pregnant as 45 days post mating, it is recommended to use this product prior to day 35 post mating. At this time, it is 94% effective, the fetuses have not ossified (started to develop bones) and therefore they are absorbed by the body rather than being expelled. This means your bitch should show only a slight thick discharge from the vulva as the only sign of the drug working. Given this it may be hard for you to be sure it has worked so an ultrasound 7-10 days after the last injection to confirm the pregnancy has been terminated is recommended.

If the pregnancy is closer to 45 days post mating, having an ultrasound done seven days after the last treatment to confirm termination is required as a third treatment may be required.

Bitches treated later than 45 days (if errors were made in dates or dates of mating are unknown) may still abort pups, some of these may survive but many will not.

SIDE EFFECTS

At the time of injections, some dogs experience some pain whilst receiving the injection which passes very quickly. Others may develop an inflammatory reaction where the injections were given. The risk of this is decreased by giving a maximum of 5ml per site. All inflammatory responses will recover with appropriate medical support within 28 days.

Other side effects reported but not commonly seen at our clinic include:

- anorexia (not eating)
- excitement
- depression
- vomiting
- diarrhoea

Of key importance however is the following side effect – uterine infection (pyometra). Whilst reports suggest this only occurs in 3% of cases, this condition is potentially fatal and needs to be watched for. Bitches suffering from this condition

may show a variety of signs including:

- increased drinking
- decreased appetite
- weight gain/distended pendulous abdomen
- vulval discharge
- vomiting
- overgrooming/licking her back end
- lethargy

If you note any of the above signs we strongly recommend seeking veterinary attention as soon as possible.

Aborted bitches are also likely to have a shortened inter-estrous period. This means they are likely to come into season earlier. If this period is less than 4 months, decreased fertility at the next heat is possible. Some aborted bitches may also experience a phantom pregnancy after treatment. This means she may still “behave” pregnant for a period of time. This again is another reason to confirm the treatment worked by ultrasound.

If you have any further questions regarding your pet, please contact us on **53811996**.