



Janice L. Cain, DVM

Diplomate, American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine

Primary Care – Canine Reproduction – Internal Medicine

T 925.866.8387 H 925.462.6445 E janicecain@comcast.net

2000 BISHOP DRIVE | SAN RAMON, CA 94583

Chilled vs. Frozen Semen: Making the Choice

I'm often asked which I prefer to use: chilled or frozen semen. The answer is both: there are a lot of things to consider and I'll try to highlight those here. I've been freezing semen for 22 years and have had great success using semen stored from dogs that have been long gone. This is a great way to line-breed back to some excellent, proven blood lines.

But, frozen semen is not always the best choice, that is, if you have a choice. In a nutshell here is the difference: frozen semen is stored for an indefinite period, and can be shipped to me to store in advance of the breeding, making that whole part of the breeding organization very simple. When the bitch is ready to inseminate, we thaw and use it immediately. Chilled semen is usually collected and shipped overnight when the bitch is ready to be bred. We request two collections, shipped 24-48 hours apart, and inseminate the bitch twice.

The higher conception rate (nearly 90%) and reduced cost of using chilled semen make chilled semen a better choice when possible. We do depend on the stud dog owner's availability to send decent semen when needed, so that might affect your decision. Some people, or their dogs, are too busy to be available for a collection and shipment when requested. Personally, I try to be available to collect and ship out chilled semen whenever needed...and if I'm out of town, I try to arrange for a backup doctor at my office. Some owners are collecting and shipping on their own these days. That might be fine in some cases, but the ability to centrifuge the semen-like I do in my office-can make a big difference in the quality of the semen once it arrives.

Frozen semen, on the other hand, is a very important tool for some breeding programs. Using semen from deceased dogs, or importing from other countries, can be an excellent choice to impact the gene pool. It is very convenient from a timing standpoint since I can store it on-site until needed. I can use the frozen semen to breed any day of the week. My favorite scenario with frozen is to do two breedings within 24 hours by transcervical insemination. This has given us a very good conception rate (over 70%) and avoids the stress, risk, and cost of surgical insemination.

What to do? When using either chilled or frozen semen, I recommend a pre-breeding exam if I've not worked with your bitch before. Also, with either choice, we have to do progesterone testing at least every other day. I'm happy to discuss the details that pertain to your specific breeding plan and will try to help you make the right choice for success!