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OVULATION TIMING INFORMATION

Why ovulation timing (OT)?

The first day of the estrous cycle is defined as the first day of vaginal bleeding, designated day one of proestrus. There is a tremendous variation between bitches as to the length of proestrus and estrus, sexual receptivity, and ovulation. It is not possible to predict ovulation from evaluation of the color of discharge, firmness of the vulva, behavior of the bitch or stud dog, vaginal smear or the number of days since the onset of proestrus. After natural breeding, sperm can survive in the female tract for 3-6 days. After artificial insemination with fresh, chilled or frozen semen or when breeding a sub-fertile bitch or stud dog, this time of sperm longevity can be greatly reduced. OT is done to ensure sperm are present when ova are ready for fertilization. OT is also VERY helpful to more accurately predict whelping dates!

Progesterone blood testing

The evaluation of serial blood progesterone levels prior to ovulation (during proestrus and early estrus) allow us to most accurately predict ovulation. Rather than wait until a specific level is reached, we evaluate the baseline, first rise, and rate of rise to determine ovulation. In general, values less than 1.0 are baseline, and increases to 1.5-2.5 are consistent with an initial rise, but this can vary greatly. Many bitches have progesterone levels that go up and down before completely rising. After ovulation, progesterone will continue to rise and will maintain high levels (>10) for approximately two months regardless of pregnancy status.

Drop-In Progesterone Testing

Progesterone testing can be done anytime during regular office hours at the Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center. You do not need to schedule an appointment with Dr. Cain or another DVM, but please do schedule a drop in appointment for the technician to draw the blood sample. All progesterone tests are sent to Idexx and results are usually available within 24 hours. Please email Dr. Cain at janicecain@comcast.net to let her know you have begun the timing process and what your plan for the breeding is (natural, side by side A/I, fresh chilled or frozen semen). Dr. Cain will email you with the results from each test and advise on the next course of action.

Protocol

Begin progesterone testing by day 5-7 of proestrus (day 1 = the first day blood is seen). If any doubt, you can start sooner. We recommend progesterone testing every other day at approximately the same time of day. Food does not need to be withheld. Once the progesterone values are changing, in some cases Dr. Cain may ask you to start daily timing to be more specific.