

## IS TECHNOLOGY LETTING US DOWN ?

Over the past few years there have been a worrying number of bitches who when mated, fail to get pregnant. The answer to why has been troubling me for some time. I must point out that my musings on this, are just that, musings.



Years ago in the 70's & 80's when Barbara and I started breeding Newfoundlands there was a set of guide lines that everybody followed. They were simple. A bitch came in season and you would watch her as her season progressed. At around day 12 if her discharge had gone from deep red blood to straw coloured and if she lifted her tail when scratched the base of her tail, you were pretty sure she was ready. If the chosen stud dog was keen then that confirmed the mating was on. Very few bitches missed even with only one or two natural matings. (Artificial Insemination is for another day)

For a good few years, the use of a progesterone blood test on the bitch has become normal. These give a reading in Nmols or NGs as to when a bitch should be mated. I have found that the dates of when to mate are often 18 or even 19 days into her season, which seems to contradict everything we were doing years ago.

We have been progesterone testing our bitches for several years now with disappointing results. Last year we had a bitch in season, who we planned to mate to a dog that lived a fair old way from us. On day 13 we took her to the vet for a progesterone blood test which was sent off to a well known lab for testing and the result was promised the next day.

However our own stud dog was telling us she was ready now on day 13 !! We know this day in her season was correct as she was watched very carefully. Milo is a very well used stud dog and we know that if a bitch is not ready he will not waste energy when it is not needed. A quick phone call to the owner of the stud dog had us jumping into the car for a very long drive, but when we arrived the stud dog was as keen as Milo and mating was achieved. The next day the lab report came back and stated the bitch was nowhere near ready to be mated and should test again in two days time. That would have been the Friday with the results ready on Saturday.

Barbara and I were not happy with this, as Milo by now was making his feeling well and truly known to us. Another call to the stud dog owner had us making arrangements to have second mating the following day (Friday) which we did. A mating was achieved and arrangements made, should we feel necessary to come back a day later. As it was, it didn't seem needed as Milo calmed right down so we left it at that.

Exactly 63 days after the first mating, Nancy produced a lovely litter of seven puppies, which suggests that the first mating was the one that did the trick. Had we waited for the second blood test, I am sure we would have been too late.

We were very lucky to have an experienced stud dog to alert us. Those less fortunate who have to follow lab test results and miss litters may benefit by heeding the old ways.

As I say these are only my thoughts, others may disagree.

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