

Dog Paternity DNA Testing

There are many reasons to breed dams to more than one sire. Now DNA testing answers the paternity question.

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The plan seems simple enough if none of the sires are related, but what if they are brothers or worse, highly inbred brothers? Two of the sires the Rehbergs used were closely related, but the DNA profiles had no problems differentiating between them. Only rarely has a situation occurred in which the AKC's former 10 marker test produced inconclusive results with closely related sires. In those cases the use of additional markers cleared things up. Now that the AKC regularly uses 14 markers, such situations should be more rare.

Planning a multiple-sired litter does require extra budgeting. The logistics of natural breedings or fresh artificial inseminations to more than one stud can be difficult, and the expense of uterine implants can be comparatively high. If chilled or frozen semen is used, the bitch owner must bear the costs of shipping and possibly collecting the semen from more than one stud! DNA profiling costs about \$40 for each dog, and must be done for the dam, all puppies, and each possible sire. The AKC will analyze the results for you for \$20 plus \$5 per additional sire. If additional markers are needed in the case of ambiguous results, it costs an extra \$20 per dog. The AKC charges \$200 to register litters from more than one sire on top of the regular registration fees for each litter (each different sire-dam combination counts as one litter). Stud fees are a private matter, but could become complicated if every contingency isn't planned ahead of time.

Is it worth it? I imagine that we will use multiple sires again, says Shirley Rehberg. By using multiple sires, we can breed a bitch just once instead of twice and have fewer puppies than had we bred two litters. There's less risk for the bitch with one litter, and let's face it, our dogs are first and foremost our pets, so reducing risks to health is probably the primary reason we will do it again.