

## Breeding Accidents

**It can happen to even the most vigilant dog breeder.**

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Prostaglandins have shortcomings. They don't last long in the system, and must be given two to three times a day for up to a week. The uterine contractions cause cramping. Side effects, which last for about a half-hour after each injection, may include excessive drooling, slowed heart rate, vomiting, and reflex defecation and urination.

Prostaglandins can be effective early in pregnancy, but only with higher doses or longer periods of administration. Lower doses given later in pregnancy produce fewer side effects, and are more effective. If pregnancy is terminated at mid-gestation (about 30 days after breeding), the fetuses are reabsorbed; if the pregnancy is in late-gestation (about 45 days after breeding), the fetuses are aborted and must be expelled.

It's important to recheck for pregnancy before discontinuing treatment, since it's possible to only partially abort a litter. This should be done with ultrasound, since relaxin decline isn't fast or complete enough to be satisfactory. Radiographs aren't effective until very late in pregnancy.

Several types of prostaglandins are available. In North America, the most common is dinoprost (Lutalyse). Synthetic prostaglandins are very potent and have been used successfully in Europe for pregnancy termination. However, no dose-response studies are available for them, and overdosing (by accidentally using the dosages suggested for natural prostaglandins) can be fatal.

Other abortion drugs may be more popular in other parts of the world. The human drug RU486 is only available in a few countries, and isn't marketed for veterinary use, but is effective without side effects. A similar drug, RU534, is available for veterinary use in France, but its future in North America is unclear. Trials show it to be effective, especially in early pregnancy, without untoward side effects.

Nobody feels comfortable about aborting potentially healthy puppies, but the reality of the situation may make this option necessary. It's difficult enough to find good homes for planned litters. Settling for less than ideal homes, or taking the responsibility to keep them all yourself, may not be the kind of compromise you hope it will be.

Pregnancy termination is both physically uncomfortable for the dog and mentally uncomfortable for you. There are no easy answers except to be even more careful in keeping unwanted pregnancies from happening.