

## Breeding Accidents

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

*D. Caroline Coile, Ph.D.*

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I was sure the gate was locked." "I didn't even know she was in heat." "I thought he was too young to breed." "I have no idea how she got out." It can happen to even the most vigilant breeder an open gate, a faulty latch, a miscommunication and suddenly your carefully sequestered siren is visited by an opportunistic stud. Now what?

First, don't assume they bred. Your veterinarian can examine a vaginal swab for incriminating sperm cells up to a day following intercourse. Even if sperm cells are found, they could have bred at the wrong time of the bitch's cycle, or failed to achieve a tie, both of which would decrease the bitch's chance of conceiving. One study found that more than 60 percent of bitches presented for mismating were in fact not pregnant. So separate the two more carefully, and then take stock of your options.

You have several choices: You can prepare for the possibility of puppies, have her spayed once she's out of estrus, or wait to see if she's pregnant, and act on that knowledge, either by spaying her, or by inducing her to abort.

One choice you should not make is the once-popular "mismatch shot," an estrogen (estradiol-cypionate or diethylstilbestrol) injection given soon after a misalliance. Mismatch shots increase the chances of uterine diseases such as pyometra, and of potentially fatal anemia. Lower doses decrease those chances but don't always terminate the pregnancy.

So you wait. Your veterinarian may be able to use ultrasound or a relaxin blood test to diagnose pregnancy by three weeks post-breeding, but if it's negative you'll want to check again the following week.

If she's pregnant, ultrasound or palpation may give you an estimate of how many puppies to expect. Perhaps you can handle just one or two puppies, although it still may be harder on the bitch than an abortion. And there's something about accidental breedings that almost ensures producing litters of record-breaking size!

Spaying is still an option. The fetuses become anesthetized with the dam, and they subsequently die when the uterus containing them is removed. The surgery and recovery take slightly longer than a normal spay, mostly because of increased bleeding and incision size. The difficulty increases as the pregnancy progresses.

If spaying is not an option, you can turn to abortion drugs. The most common regime in North America is the administration of prostaglandins. These hormones are naturally produced around whelping time, causing uterine contractions and reducing the production of progesterone necessary to maintain pregnancy.