

## Preparing to Breed (The Bitch)

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Client Educational Handout

### Health Exam

It is important to have the female examined by your reproductive veterinarian. Although she may have had exams in the past, some diseases are common with aging. For example, dilated cardiomyopathy is a disease of Dobermans that may not be apparent at 3 years of age, but be debilitating at 3.5 years of age. This would be a prime example of a health issue that can be detected with pre breeding health exams. Some veterinarians, depending on the breed, age of the bitch, condition of the bitch, genetics of the bitch, and scenario of breeding may want to do pre breeding blood screening, ekg, radiographs of the chest and abdomen and more before a breeding is performed. There are many conditions, especially with an aging bitch, that your reproductive veterinarian may want to refer your female to a specialist before advising you to breed to thoroughly investigate a pre existing heart murmur, or an endocrine disease, etc. The heat cycle of your female should be expected on or near a particular date. The pre breeding health exam should be completed months before the heat cycle starts.

### Health Testing and Genetic Testing

Most health testing should be preformed long before deciding to breed the bitch. In fact, puppy's bought with the intentions of breeding them should be genetically confirmed to have the health and qualities before purchase. It is strongly advisable that the puppy seller performs these tests on your request, and sometimes it would be considered normal to have the puppy buyer repeat these tests to verify the results to be consistent with what the seller was claiming when the puppy is acquired. Health testing is usually done by a specialist. Ophthalmologist will evaluate and certify eyes for those dogs prone to through ophthalmic issues, Cardiologists will evaluate and certify hearts to be free and clear of pathology considered unfit for breeding or genetically transferable, Orthopedist and many general practitioners are able to evaluate hips, spine, knees, and elbows to obtain images and exam findings to report to orthopedic foundation for animals (OFA) as suggested necessary by their veterinarians. Knowing and understanding your breeds health concerns, should be at the top of the priority list before ever considering purchasing a dog for breeding. This information needed is readily available through OFA and American Kennel Club (AKC) specific for the breed of your interest.

### Vaccinations

Although there is much to debate on the significance of vaccinations in your canine companions, the general consensus is that a female should be fully vaccinated for the core vaccines including Rabies, Parvovirus, Distemper Virus, Adenovirus, and Leptospirosis at the bare minimum. Current research suggests given a booster to your female's antibody levels by vaccinating them months before breeding them may help to provide her puppies with a high protective level of circulating antibodies when they are born. Consult with your veterinarian at her pre breeding health exam as to which vaccines she needs and could benefit from.

## **Heartworm Testing**

Heartworm is a disease that affects numerous dogs in America, and is transmitted through mosquito bites. We typically test for it annually, and give preventive heartworm medications such as Heartgard once monthly. In the most previous years, we are seeing an uptick in heartworm infection that seems to be immune to our preventive medications. This is one of the main reasons why, even though we give preventives, we still test for it annually. A bitch going into a pregnancy with heartworm could be devastating to the mom and the puppies. Also, during your pre breeding health exam with your veterinarian, ask about which heartworm preventives are approved and safe for pregnant and lactating bitches, and make plans to carefully select the most appropriate preventive for your breed, plans, and situation.

## **Brucella Testing**

Brucella is a bacterial infection that is usually associated with breeding. It is a communicable infection, meaning it is contagious to people that are in contact with the bitch and the puppies. Because there are no good available treatment for the infection, it is often a deadly infection that should be avoided when possible. Brucella is transmitted through sperm and breeding fluids from the female. Before each breeding, it should be planned to have a brucella test performed at the pre breeding examination. There is a 1 week turnaround time on the test most commonly. It should also be advised, that the stud is tested before the breeding you are planning to have with your female to best minimize the risks of your family and kennel acquiring the infection.

## **Sire**

When choosing a sire, considering your breeding vision, plans, and goals. A stud should bring health characteristics, conformation and structural characteristics, and temperament improvements at the very least. Finding qualities that will compliment your females traits and genetics should be a goal of all breeders when selecting a sire. Ask your sire owner for health testing information, previous litter demographics and characteristics, and temperament qualities. Look to our document titled, selecting a stud.

## **Planning**

There are extensive details needing to be considered when planning a breeding. When will this breeding occur, when will the puppies be born, when will they be ready for their new homes or training and showing? What is your work schedule during those times, travel plans, what time of year will it be and weather limitations, and what other things may be occurring in your life and the world during this time frame. Do you have enough money set aside? Health examinations, health testing, vaccinations, medications and supplements needed, heartworm and brucella testing, stud fees, progesterone testing, ultrasound, breeding costs and expenses, cesarean section if needed, puppy exams and medications, puppy health vaccinations, and travel expenses to deliver or show puppies if applicable, show training/travel/and entry fees for the puppies, and more. Money set aside for unexpected emergencies might they arise, such as for health issues for mom or the puppies, infections such as mastitis, time taken off work to care for the puppies, etc. Where will you keep the litter? Will you invite strangers into your home, or where will you show the puppies? Where will you advertise? Are you legally able to sell the puppies, do you have an LLC and a tax identification number to pay state sales tax and report federal

income earned? Do you carry the proper insurance, what if you female attacks a potential puppy buyer when coming to view puppies at your house? And More....

Is she on the correct nutrition, is she on any medications that are harmful to her pregnancy or puppies? Building a team by choosing an experienced mentor, getting involved in your breeds local group, finding breeding groups to consult with, and most importantly choosing a veterinarian with knowledge and commitment to breeding is important to navigate through your planning to breed, and this starts long before starting the breeding process.