

# Let's Talk Greyhounds™

**The Newsletter with News, Views and Practical Advice**

**Issue #11  
Australia**

**From the Editor.....**

Thank you for the great response in requesting a free copy of our new booklet dedicated to training and fitness of racing greyhounds. We plan to have the booklet, which includes interesting physiological statistics related to heart rates, blood volumes and oxygen uptake in the greyhound as an athlete, published within the next month. If you haven't added your name to the mailing list, you are welcome to do so by emailing, phoning or faxing us your name and postal address details.

In this issue of 'Let's Talk Greyhounds', I thought it would be an interesting change to answer questions sent in by readers of the UK Greyhound Star Magazine. I have been writing an article and answering reader's questions each month for the last 30 years. During this time I have answered over 2,000 reader's questions. Many of the questions are of real concern to the trainers and I attempt to answer them with additional discussion.

I hope you find the questions and answers of interest.

Until next issue,

Good Racing

*Dr John Kohuke BVSc RDA*



## **Common Questions from Trainers**

**Q.** I recently had a bitch mated that missed. I was convinced that she would be spot on two days after she left me, but the stud keeper insisted that she needed another couple of days. Personally, I think he had a bitch booked in for the day I wanted and then he tried to blind me with facts about hormone readings.

Do you have any information that might help please? I realise this mating has gone, but it might help me next time.

**A.** In most cases, progesterone hormone readings are the most accurate means of determining the optimum time of ovulation and to breed.

During the pro-oestrus phase, and the 'true heat' and 'oestrus' phase, the ovaries secrete an increasing concentration of the female hormone or oestradiol, which can now be monitored and measured by taking samples of blood at daily intervals. However, in practice, because of the expense of the assay tests for this hormone, it is normally too expensive as a routine test for the majority of greyhound breeders. Not all veterinary laboratories have the assay as a routine daily run, and therefore delays and difficulties will be encountered by your vet in finding a laboratory that can run the assay and advise the results within 12-24 hours.

### **In This Issue:**

📧 Common Questions from Trainers

**The simplest test to monitor the changes that are occurring in the vagina and womb to prepare the bitch for mating, is the examination of the type and appearance of the vaginal lining cells. The vaginal cellular changes coincide with, or 'mimic', the level of oestrogens or female hormone as it peaks at start of the receptive or 'oestrus' stage of the cycle.**

The second stage of the cycle is the 'oestrus' phase, which spans the time of ovarian follicle maturation and ovulation, culminating in the bitch becoming receptive to the male dog, and allowing mating. This phase can range from 5-20 days in length, even in normal bitches. Greyhound bitches tend to ovulate later in their oestrus cycle compared with other breeds of dogs.

Therefore, the cycle length from the initial signs of pro-oestrus to the receptive stage can be about 13-15 days, but may extend to as long as the 18-20<sup>th</sup> day. Normally ovulation occurs about 2-3 days after the beginning of the oestrus phase. When the discharge changes from blood tinged to a clearish straw colour, the simplest way to monitor the normality of the oestrus phase, and also the time for optimum mating, is the measurement of the progesterone hormone concentration in a sample of blood serum. A blood level of about 2 units per mL heralds the onset of the oestrus period, with an increasing concentration in the blood as the bitch progresses into full oestrus, and becomes receptive to the stud.

Progesterone concentrations peak at about 15-21 days after the onset of the cycle, and 'nowadays' this is one of the simplest tests that can be carried out to monitor the time of ovulation and the optimum time for breeding.

In practice, it is best to monitor blood progesterone starting at day 10 of the season cycle, and repeat every second day until an initial 'spike' or rise occurs. It is then recommended to mate the bitch on day 4 and 6 after the initial blood progesterone increase is detected.

Simple 'in house' diagnostic test kits are now available for use by veterinarians in practice. The progesterone assay test is the most useful way to monitor the time of ovulation and the overall management of breeding, particularly in bitches which show no external or outward sign of oestrus or receptive behaviour to the stud dog. Most larger veterinary practices, and especially those specialising in dog breeding, have on-the-spot 'test kits' that can be used to monitor progesterone levels on a day to day basis, if necessary, in a bitch with a history of non-receptivity or lack of normal receptive behaviour at the time of ovulation.

Studies have shown that the optimum time for conception and a guaranteed larger litter size, occurs when a bitch is bred about 2 days after the time of ovulation. Older bitches normally have a less favourable womb environment for

**survival of the sperm from the stud dog. In a younger bitch, sperm may remain active for up to 4-6 days, and be more likely to fertilise an ovulation occurring between the 12<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> days of the bitch's season, if she will accept the dog. In older bitches, semen may only survive for 12-24 hours, and there is much less leeway for mating and ovulation. Sperm from an older stud dog with a relatively poor sperm count, also has a much reduced survival time, even when the animal is successfully mated to a young healthy bitch in full season.**

However, a clinical sign of the changing colour in the vaginal fluid from a dark colour to a straw coloured excretion usually helps pinpoint optimum ovulation, especially in a maiden bitch or one which is showing little oestrous behaviour when in the presence of the stud dog. I suggest that you contact a local greyhound breeder or a specialist greyhound vet who may be able to provide specific and practical advice on what to observe relative to the time of mating.

**Q. I have a young dog that is prone to take an extra circuit after a race. He recently really over did it by running two more complete circuits before he was caught.**

**His back has since 'melted' and he looks in a very bad state. Any suggestions on recovery and time scale would be greatly appreciated.**

**A.** Muscle acidosis caused by excess galloping, dehydration stress or lack of fitness for a race distance is termed Hypoxic Rhabdomyolysis. It is a very severe metabolic condition which must be treated promptly. The widespread acute muscle damage along the top-line and hind quarters leads to dehydration, severe muscle 'melt down' or wastage, toxæmia and kidney and liver damage. Toxic greyhounds lose weight rapidly over 24-36 hours and are likely to die if not treated. Intravenous fluids, electrolyte and prompt anti-stress management, with immediate hospitalisation and therapy by your vet is essential. Once the greyhound's condition is stabilised, then rehabilitation can commence. A specific muscle protein supplement, such as **Sprinter GOLD® Muscle-Pro™**, which contains branched chain amino acids, Vitamin E and organic zinc for muscle protein synthesis, is recommended. An adequate intake of good quality protein dry food, boosted by a couple of cooked eggs per day for 2-3 weeks, a general dietary supplement and electrolytes to flush the kidneys of toxic waste, all help the recovery process. In severe cases, the muscle wastage is so severe with fibrous healing within the muscles, which may result in permanent muscle loss and force retirement from racing. Consult your vet for more advice.

**Q. I have just started training my own dogs and would really appreciate some advice about keeping dogs warm in the winter. In your opinion, is it better to rug the dogs up in a cooler kennel or install reverse cycle heating?**

**A.** Under practical conditions it is best to rug greyhounds if the ambient temperature in the kennels drops below 20°C, as heat loss and energy depletion increases, further increasing below 15°C, which can sap energy away from racing. However, if the kennel temperature is likely to fall below 10°C, such as during winter or overnight, then controlled heating set on 17-20°C makes them more comfortable without energy drain. Reverse cycle split system air conditioners, set on economy heating cycle are popular to warm kennels in winter, may be more efficient, cheaper to run and safer compared with electric bar heaters. Refrigerated air conditioners can dehydrate the air in the kennel

and can dry out the greyhound's lungs, risking dehydration and respiratory infections. It is a good idea to place a bowl of water in the kennel room so that it can evaporate and maintain a normal relative humidity. It is more important to rehydrate the air if the cooling cycle is used in summer to maintain a 20-25°C comfortable temperature in the kennels and facilitate 6-8 air changes per hour.

**Q. Could you please give me some advice on cortisone. I have a dog which has a ligament problem that the vet has suggested he could treat with cortisone to presumably bring down the inflammation. However, he is not a specialist greyhound vet and I have spoken to some trainers who are strongly against using cortisone. If in doubt, I would probably just leave it and let nature take its course, however long that is. Any advice would be great.**

**A.** Cortisone is often injected in small specific doses to help reduce inflammation in a ligament, but it can be detected in a swab as your vet will explain. Only short acting cortisone needling should be given, as long acting forms of cortisone can attract calcium which deposits at the needle site to form a hard lump. This can interfere with ligament function and create a further weak spot in the healing ligament. I suggest that you seek advice from a specialist greyhound vet as other alternatives, such as oral anti-inflammatories, magnetic field and laser therapy may be more suited to help reduce inflammation and promote healing.

**Do you have any questions?  
If so, please email [info@sprinterGold.com](mailto:info@sprinterGold.com)**

## PRODUCT OF THE ISSUE



**Sprinter GOLD® Whelp 'n' Grow™** - the fully balanced, most up-to-date supplement for pregnant and lactating bitches and growing pups. It is supplemented on a body weight and age basis, making it easy and accurate to meet the special needs of breeding and growing greyhounds. **Many breeders are pleased with the stronger, larger pups when Whelp 'n' Grow™ is fed to lactating bitches and after weaning.**

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Dr John Kohnke accepts no responsibility or liability for unseen consequences resulting from the hints and advice given in this newsletter.