Policy: Boarding Female Dogs in Season

Raisers of intact female puppies have the following options for housing in season females:

- At home
- In the home of an approved puppy sitter or leader
- At a commercial kennel at raiser expense

Homes (raiser/puppy sitter/leader) will be required to follow certain guidelines while the dog is in season, including:

- Female canine seasons (proestrus and estrus) generally run for approximately 21 days, but individual dogs may stay in season for longer periods (see "Education" below). It is during this period when females attract male dogs and enter their fertile period. The following guidelines are effective from the first through the 28th day of a dog's season or longer as required. Only the club leader may release a dog from the management of these guidelines after a consultation between the raiser and leader to insure that the dog is out of season.
- The raiser's leader must approve participating homes.
- Yard and home security should be of the highest standard. Marginally safe fencing and doors, or young children who could possibly leave doors and gates open, may disqualify a home.
- No unaltered or recently altered (within the past six weeks) male dogs may live in the home.
- The close proximity of neighboring or loose unaltered dogs may disqualify a home.
- Participating raisers must be capable dog handlers.
- Participating raisers must have a demonstrated willingness and ability to follow all guidelines.
- All participating raisers and family members must be trained by their leaders prior to boarding a female dog in season.
- No outings outside of the home or yard are allowed.
- No interaction with unaltered male dogs is allowed.
- While in the house and not under direct supervision of a raiser or GDB-trained family member, a dog must be confined to a crate.
- Dogs may not be left loose in a yard (other than in an approved kennel run) without direct supervision by a raiser or GDB-trained family member. Male dogs can be attracted to the scent of an estrus female dog from long distances and can be extremely determined to enter even well-confined areas, thus, the need for direct supervision.
- Dogs may be left unsupervised in a pre-approved kennel run, meeting strict specifications, with CFR approval. See guidelines below.
- Any dog that becomes lost, loose, or otherwise unsupervised must be reported immediately to the raiser's CFR or the Puppy Raising Manager or CCP Operations Manager, regardless of the time period that the dog has been unsupervised.
- Any in season female dog that comes into any contact with an unaltered male dog must be reported immediately to the raiser's CFR or the Puppy Raising Manager or CCP Operations Manager.

We encourage all leaders, with the support of their CFR, to develop protocols for raiser families with intact females. Clubs should have a plan prepared well ahead of the time a female may come into season.
GUIDELINES FOR DOG RUNS/KENNELS TO CONTAIN FEMALES IN SEASON

When housing a GDB puppy in season it is generally preferred that the female be left with a sitter, or crated inside the home when the raiser is away. However, raisers have the option, with leader and CFR approval, of utilizing a dog run/kennel where the dog can be safely left while the raiser is at work, etc. Clubs may consider purchasing such a kennel that can be set up at an approved sitter home, or loaned to the raiser in need, for the duration of the heat cycle. Prefabricated dog runs are relatively easy to assemble with limited tools, however a truck is required to transport due to the size of the prefab panels. Individual raisers may also elect to purchase dog runs for use with GDB program dogs.

The dog run must placed within a GDB approved fenced yard that has securely latched and locked gates. In some geographic areas it may be practical to locate the dog run in an insulated, well-ventilated garage or outbuilding.

Good quality, ready-made dog runs are available at most larger hardware and farm supply stores. Beware that lighter gage chain link dog runs may not be secure and will not hold up to use over time. (See "Construction" below.)

Plan ahead! Quality, used, portable dog runs can often be found on Craigslist or Facebook. Checking periodically can really pay off for the savvy raiser or club!

Requirements for Dog Run/Kennel:

- **Size:** minimum size 6'H X 6'W X 12'L (slight variation may be approved by CFR)
- **Construction:** A rectangle dog run vs square is preferred to provide more enticement for movement and options for a relieving area. Choose 10 gage and lower wire (lower the gage the stronger the wire) for chain link. Welded wire panels are much stronger and more durable.
- **Gate:** The gate must have a device/safety measure to prevent the dog from nudging the latch to open the run. A clip, hook, chain or cable may suffice. If there are children in the home or frequent visitors, a lock is required on the run itself, not just the yard gate.
- **Cover:** The kennel run must be covered by wire or wood to prevent escape. A shade cover is not sufficient to prevent the dog from climbing out or another dog from climbing in.
- **Shade/Protection from the Elements:** If outdoors the run must be covered to provide shade and/or a dry area.
- **Dog House:** A chew-proof dog house such as an “Igloo” brand shelter should be provided for inclement weather (rain or colder temperatures).
- **Flooring:** The kennel run should be placed on cement or pavers to insure it is dig-proof and easy to clean. Rubber horse stall mats may be acceptable as a surface so long as the outer edges protrude outside of the run area where the dog cannot grab them!
- **All of the guidelines in the Confinement document located in the House Behavior section of the puppy raising manual also apply.**

EDUCATION: FEMALE DOGS IN SEASON

The reproductive cycle of ovulation in dogs is identified as being "in season" or "in heat." During this period female dogs ovulate, generating eggs. In season dogs are capable of being bred by male dogs, fertilizing the eggs and producing puppies. Spayed dogs do not come into season.

The foremost rule to always remember is that exceptions to timing, patterns, and identifying markers are frequent within individual dogs and between dogs. Raisers and leaders should always be vigilant with intact females and be aware of their coming into, remaining, or perhaps re-entering seasons (see below).

Generally, dogs come into season every six months beginning some time after six months of age. Our GDB breeds may come in as early as six months old but more generally around nine months or as late as a year or more. Cycles may run like clockwork every six months or they may happen more or less frequently. Some females may even start a season, appear to go out-of-season, and start immediately again. This pattern is often referred to as a "split season". One can see the need for raisers and leaders to continually monitor dogs and not to trust any pattern to apply to individual dogs. Failing to properly identify the cycle of an individual dog may lead to an accidental breeding.
A standard season runs for approximately 21 days. The season may be preceded by a slight swelling of the
dog’s vulva. The season begins with a bright or dark red discharge from the dog's vulva. The discharge
initially may be no more than a drop. Many females keep themselves very clean, and there may be no visible
blood around the vulvar area. As the season progresses through the first week or so, the discharge generally
increases and then decreases in volume and color. The vulva can be very enlarged and turgid during the first
week, and then begins to soften. Some dogs may have a very heavy discharge and swelling; others may
show lesser signs. Again, diligence in monitoring all dogs as individuals is required.

After being in season for approximately seven to ten days, the amount and color of the discharge will lighten.
The swelling will also lessen. In some dogs the reduction of swelling and discharge may be so significant that
the dog appears to be out of season. This is not the case. The dog is actually entering her most fertile period
when a male can inseminate her! Extra caution is needed. It is also important to note that sperm can be viable
and capable of impregnating an estrus female dog for as long as 7 days following a single mating. Therefore,
one inattentive moment can lead to an unwanted pregnancy.

As the days pass and the swelling and discharge continue to lighten, the dog is still breedable. Some dogs
are capable of conceiving beyond the twentieth day of season. Raisers must continually be cautious, following
our guidelines for at least 28 days, and not lessening the required supervision until released by their leader.

Sometimes a female may go through what is known as a “silent heat.” This is when the usual physical signs
of the heat cycle, the swelling and the bleeding, are not present. There may still be behavioral changes,
including an increased interest from or with other dogs.

Other behavioral indicators may or may not be present. During and in the time surrounding a dog’s season,
there may be a change in overall activity levels, with the female becoming much more active and “busy.” The
change in behaviors may include flagging (raising the tail), play bowing or tipping forward, increased barking
or whining, inability to settle or relax, and becoming more destructive. There may be an increase in level of
thirst or appetite, and a change in elimination habits. The female may seem nervous or clingier. These
behavioral changes can begin to occur up to three or four weeks before the physical signs of the heat cycle.
More commonly, they occur in the week before the physical signs begin. In some females, there may be no
noticeable change in behaviors at all. In others, just one or two of those listed. Also, behavioral changes do
not always indicate the onset of the heat cycle. At the beginning of her cycle, the female may become less
tolerant of other dogs approaching or sniffing her. She may lift her lip, growl, hackle, or even snap at the other
dog. Instead of wagging her tail when other dogs sniff her rear, she may tuck it tightly straight down against
her body. This does not mean she is becoming aggressive; it is a normal behavioral change. She will be her
friendly self once again when her cycle is over. If the raiser suspects a silent heat cycle, the CFR should be
notified through the leader.

Occasionally, towards the end of the heat cycle or in the weeks following it, the increase in hormone levels
may cause the mammary glands to become active and to produce milk. Some people call this a "false
pregnancy.” This is not considered abnormal; but again, the CFR should be made aware.

Any sign of recurring discharge or swelling requires additional management and must be reported
immediately to the club leader who will speak to the CFR.

*Raisers should remember that exceptions to any patterns are frequent and that all dogs must be managed
individually and with caution.*

A leader who is uncertain of a dog’s reproductive cycle should consult with his/her CFR, who may consult with
the GDB veterinary clinic.