



CARING FOR A FEMALE DOG IN HEAT

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The first heat cycle generally occurs between 9 and 14 months for Golden Retrievers but varies depending on the dog, and they come into heat every 6 to 9 months. During this time, you may witness behavior changes in both the females and males in the vicinity of the female. A male can pick up the scent from quite a distance, so be cautious while walking and while in the backyard if a male could be in the neighboring.

To prevent unwanted pregnancy and reduce stress caused by male attention, the most important thing you must do is keep male dogs away while they are in heat! Even neutered males may be interested in a female during a heat.

OVERVIEW

- When a female dog is in heat, she has reached sexual maturity and is ready to mate. During this time, her body will release hormones into the bloodstream, attracting male dogs from miles away.
- The most common signs that your female dog may be entering heat are increased urination, changes in behavior (such as being clingier), swollen vulva, and bloody vaginal discharge. It is important to note that these symptoms can vary depending on your dog's breed.
 - **Bleeding:** The most obvious sign of a female dog being in heat is bleeding or discharge from the swollen vulva. This phase is called proestrus and lasts about 7-10 days. As the bloody discharge fades from red to pink, the dog enters the estrus phase of heat and is now fertile. This phase lasts about 5-14 days. During these 2 phases, take caution to keep a female separate from an intact male, as it may be challenging to differentiate between the 2 phases. Remember, even neutered males may still be interested.
 - **Behavioral Changes:** In addition to physical signs, there will also be behavioral changes that you can look out for. When your female dog is in heat, she will exhibit certain behaviors that indicate she is ready to mate. These include increased whining, licking herself excessively, and urinating more frequently than usual (especially around males).
 - **Being More Vocal:** Female dogs in heat may become more vocal, with additional whining and whimpering; they may even try to escape from the house or yard if given the opportunity. Additionally, you may find her clingier than usual or exhibiting unusual behavior, such as trying to mount other animals or objects around her environment.
- The average length of an estrus cycle is around 21 days, which can vary depending on the dog. It can last anywhere from four days to three weeks on average.
- They may display additional behavioral changes such as increased affection towards humans or other animals, restlessness or irritability, and excessive licking of the genital area. Take precautions and be extra kind to your dog.

KEY POINTS

- Extra walks and playtime can help distract her from male dogs trying to catch her scent.

- Ensure plenty of fresh water is available since she may become dehydrated.
- Maintain a separate area for your female to relax and find comfort. She may find her crate a safe place.
- Monitor her closely for any changes in behavior or health that could indicate an infection or other health issues related to being in heat. The RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) states it's essential to watch dogs during their first heat, as they could be more prone to urine infections, tiredness, and a change in appetite.
- Monitor their behavior closely, and if you notice any changes or anything unusual, contact your veterinarian immediately for advice on how best to proceed.

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- Make sure you have enough supplies, such as disposable diapers/pads and wipes; these will be helpful while cleaning up accidents due to increased urination frequency.
- Keep her space clean by regularly changing bedding; this will help keep bacteria growth at bay, which can cause infections if left unchecked during this period.
- Give her extra attention; this may be difficult because she may not want much contact with people during this time, but it's still important that she feels loved and comforted during this sensitive period, so try giving her extra toys or treats if possible.
- Be patient; understanding why your dog acts differently when they enter their heat cycle can help minimize any frustrations you may feel towards them while they're going through it!