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Living with an “In Season” Female

By Diane Blackman, CPDT-KA, IACP PDTI/CDTA, CTDI

You decided to add a female dog to your household, and the research is showing it is best for not to spay her until she's older. That means, you will need to learn how to live with her during her seasons. Here are the answers to the most asked questions about living with an intact female:

1. What does “in season” mean?

- a. While there are four phases for a female's reproductive cycle, generally a female's season is referring to the proestrus and estrus stages of her cycle. It is in these two stages where males are attracted to a female and a female will become receptive to their advances and can get pregnant.

2. How long does a season last?

- a. A female's season lasts approximately 21 days and begins when you first see her bloody discharge. This discharge will last on average nine days but could be shorter or longer. Because seasons vary from female to female, all female dogs should be kept away from males for the entire 21 days to prevent pregnancy. For safety and health reasons, dogs are not allowed in Dawgie daycare and/or classes during her season. Private lessons can still be held, though we ask that she wear a female diaper if she comes into the building.
- b. A female will typically cycle every six to 12 months. Each female has her own cycle. You can expect a young dog's seasons not to be consistent the first couple of times. This includes how long she bleeds, how long the season lasts and time between seasons. We recommend tracking your dog's seasons on a calendar.

3. When will she come into season?

- a. An intact female dog will come into season when she reaches sexual maturity. This can range anywhere from when a female is six months to 18 months of age. Typically, the smaller the dog, the sooner she will come into season.

4. How do you know she's in season?

- a. Approximately one month prior to her coming into season, her vulva will swell. Owners can check her vulva every couple of days to see if they notice any changes.

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- b. If you suspect she's in season, take a white paper towel or toilet tissue and gently wipe her vulva. If there is red on the paper towel/tissue, she's in season – even if it is just a little amount of blood.
 - c. Your dog may be more (or less) affectionate and urinate more as she is advertising her status to surrounding males. During the beginning of her season, she may keep her tail tucked and/or be snarky if a dog sniffs her rear end. During the latter part, she may flirt with male dogs, including but not limited to, pushing her rear end towards a male dog's nose and flagging, where she moves her tail away from her vulva when touched.
5. **What should I do for my dog to come back to classes and/or daycare after her season?**
- a. We recommend washing (at least her rear end) with a dog shampoo before she comes back to classes and/or daycare. This will help dissipate the smell of her being in season.
6. **Is there anything I shouldn't do when she's in season?**
- a. We do not recommend swimming your female when she's in season. During this time, her cervix is open, and bacteria could enter and cause an infection.
7. **How can we keep her clean during her season?**
- a. Most females will keep themselves clean. However, you can put female diapers on her. You can use a human pantyliner to catch the blood and replace as it becomes soiled.
 - b. Here's a short list of vendors who make female dog diapers:
 - i. www.seasonals.com
 - ii. www.etsy.com/shop/ParadiseDogGear
 - iii. https://www.facebook.com/cindygalster/?hc_location=ufi
 - iv. www.pantsfordogs.com



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