

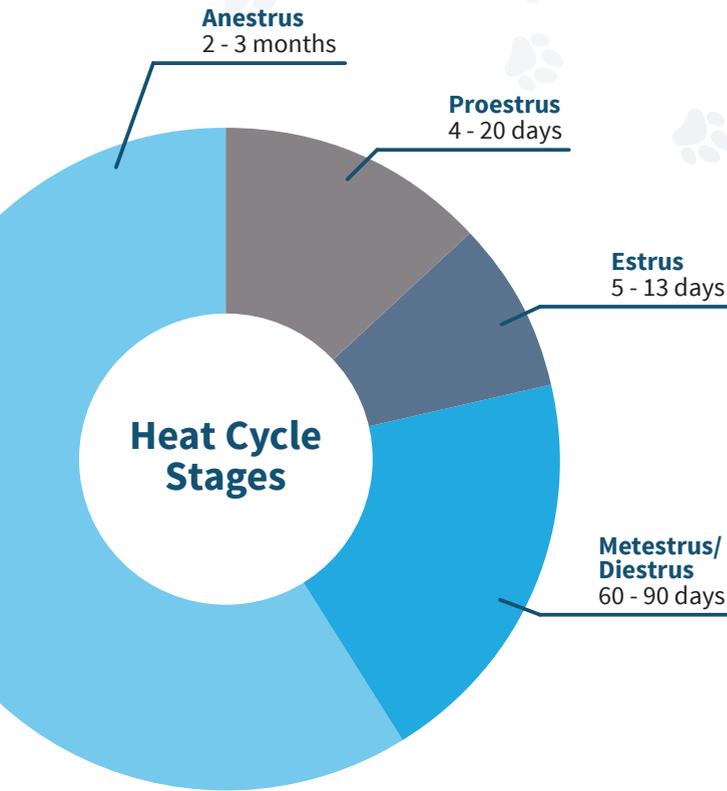
HOW OFTEN ARE DOGS IN HEAT?

On average, a female dog will come into her first heat between 6 and 15 months of age. After their first season, most dogs have a heat every 6-7 months (twice a year). Most dogs have longer gaps between their seasons as they get older but they can still get pregnant.

Some dogs have slightly longer or shorter cycles, but they should be regular. Speak to your vet if your dog has irregular seasons.

UNDERSTANDING THE 4 STAGES

1. **Proestrus** - Spotting of blood and swelling of the vulva
2. **Estrus** - When the dog is fertile and ready to find a mate
3. **Diestrus** - The dog is no longer fertile, whether they're pregnant or not
4. **Anestrus** - The resting stage that lasts 100 or so days before the heat cycle starts again



HOW TO TELL IF A DOG IS IN HEAT

As a pet parent, it's a good idea to verse yourself well on the signs of a dog entering their heat cycle.

Frequent urination - This is one of the most common signs that a dog is entering heat, especially if they're uncharacteristically urinating in the house.

Vaginal bleeding and/or discharges - A female dog may lightly discharge and/or bleed from her vagina while entering the proestrus stage. The bleeding will grow heavier and lighten in colour as she enters the estrus stage.



More attention paid to male dogs - If a female dog in heat sees a male dog, she'll "flirt" with him by exposing and raising her rear in his direction while moving her tail out of the way.

Excessive genital licking - A female dog in heat will excessively lick (or "clean") her genital area.

Nervously aggressive behaviour - Since a female dog in heat is secreting mating hormones, she may exhibit unusually aggressive behaviour.

Other signs of a dog in heat include **tail tucking** and the **swelling** of the vulva.



KEEPING HER OCCUPIED

Your dog will be feeling hormonal, out of sorts and probably a bit confused during her season, so it's important to keep her happy and distracted.



Keep her entertained by playing games and giving her things to do in the house (such as a treat-filled toy) and take her on walks (away from other dogs) to keep her calm.

During your dog's heat, she will be very attracted to males and want to mate. To avoid an unwanted pregnancy, you will need to supervise her the whole time she is in season, keep her on a lead and away from other dogs on walks, avoid leaving her alone in the garden, and keep her completely separate from any uncastrated males (including any that live in your household).

Keep her confined at night, male dogs can smell a female in season over long distance.



Ensure she is well locked up, so she does not try to run off and find a potential mate, or tempt them to your back door.

INCREASED AGGRESSION

Just like humans, all dogs are different and will display different behaviours when they're in heat. Some pups may demand more of your attention and become overly clingy. Others may start to display anger or aggression towards dogs, especially males who try to mate with her that she doesn't want to mate with. She may also display increased mounting behaviour, even trying to mount your leg, cushions, and other objects around the house. You need to watch her around children at this time when she becomes agitated and unpredictable.

SHOULD I GET MY DOG SPAYED?

During spring and summer, a lot of dogs come into season and unwanted pregnancies are common. A lot of puppies are born and given away as a gift at Christmas time, occasionally resulting in puppies being abandoned when people underestimate the commitments of owning a dog.

If you don't intend to breed from your pup, you should seriously consider getting her spayed or your dog neutered. Not only will it protect them from unwanted pregnancies, but it can also help reduce the risk of certain diseases like cancer. It will also stop the urge for roaming or causing a nuisance to neighbouring dog owners when coming into season.

The Council may be able to help you with providing a granted free desexing voucher, thanks to the **Fred Lewis Foundation** and sponsored by **Enterprise Motor Group Gisborne**. The best thing: the procedure is done here in Wairoa so there is no need for travel.

Contact the Compliance Team for more information about desexing and eligibility for the free voucher!

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DOGS IN HEAT

Understanding your beloved pooch and choosing the best option that suits you both.

