

BACK TO BACK

Quantity or Quality

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Back to Back - Quantity or Quality

Twenty years ago, what was thought of as a distasteful and irresponsible act has now come into favor. Breeding back to back, the practice of breeding a bitch in two or three successive heat cycles, is considered to be healthier for the bitch's uterus. It is said that hormones produced in a normal cycle cause damage to the uterine lining and that the condition and health of the uterus is directly related to the total number of seasons the bitch has had. We are told therefore, a bitch's uterus would be healthier on her next season than it would be on the season after that. These facts have been well documented and I don't doubt their accuracy. I think, however, there are other factors to be considered before deciding to adopt this practice.

Perhaps the uterus is fine with back to back breedings, but what is the stress level of the bitch during this time period to produce good milk, raise healthy puppies and regain her own healthy appearance? A bitch isn't a puppy machine, but a treasured part of one's breeding program. If you look at your bitch when her puppies are about twelve weeks old, you will see the stress she has gone through. She can be thin, losing sometimes all of her coat and be depressed and tired from a weakened immune system. Shouldn't she have the traditional year to rest and recover from this assault on her body?

Veterinarians who encourage this practice need to incorporate the rest of the story along with their medical opinions, not just the bitch's uterus. Breeders are dependent on their advice.

Responsible hobbyists do not focus on how many puppies a bitch can make but how good her puppies will be. We should always be moving towards our ideal Labrador, trying to produce the very best we can and have a goal in mind at all times. We should be breeding to keep something to go on with. There are no shortcuts in this goal. Much more would be learned by getting a bitch, doing all you can with her, learning a lot along the way at shows, hunt tests and obedience trials, meeting and talking to other breeders and watching dogs that will form the direction you truly want to go. Breeding back to back litters hardly gives you time to focus on what you've just accomplished before you're knee deep in newspapers and pine chips once again.

How can we possibly know if a bitch is going to be a good producer if she is in whelp again before the first litter is even 6 months old? How can we possibly know how sound the puppies are at such an early age? Where's the fun in having back to back litters for the bitch or the owner? The uterus might be healthy, but what about the rest of the bitch? How could she possibly get back into condition in such a short time in order to do the miracle of birth scenario all over again? Reproductionists who suggest this are thinking from a very narrow perspective when the whole dog should be considered.

So who are back to back breeders ... Forward thinking geniuses or unethical breeders? Is it better to breed a bitch in successive heat cycles regardless of the quality she produces? Should we ignore the physical appearance of a bitch after having a litter and breed her again because it's the right thing to do for her uterus? If this is going to be an accepted practice, I think we need to hear more from the repro specialists to provide breeders with the whole picture of this style of breeding, not just with a history of the life cycle of her uterus. There is more to being a breeder than that.

We call ourselves serious hobby breeders, but what distinguishes us from those who just make puppies?

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September 2, 2006
Revised: August 19, 2019

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