

Phantom Pregnancy in Dogs

What is a phantom pregnancy ?

A phantom pregnancy, also known as a false pregnancy or pseudopregnancy, is a condition that a bitch can develop after being in season. It is triggered by hormones produced in the body that can make some dogs feel pregnant when they aren't.

Symptoms:

Signs of phantom pregnancy usually present 6-8 weeks after the bitch has been in season, and the signs can last a few weeks, signs include:

- Swollen mammary glands
- Milk production
- Nesting behaviour
- Low energy
- Reduced appetite
- Mastitis

Treatment:

Most cases of phantom pregnancy present with mild signs that resolve after a few weeks without the need for treatment. It is important to consider whether your dog may indeed be pregnant, as the needs of the dog will be different than for a dog undergoing a phantom pregnancy.

Cabergoline - is a hormonal medication designed to reduce signs of phantom pregnancy, in particular milk production. It is given as a liquid by mouth for 1-2 weeks.

Distraction - increasing exercise and playtime can help distract your dog and may reduce behavioural signs.

Remove any toys - Removing toys or blankets that are being used to exhibit nesting or mothering behaviour will also help. This is best done when the dog is distracted or when out on a walk.



Try to stop your dog from licking around her teats/nipples, overstimulation will delay recovery and may increase the chance of infection (mastitis). A buster collar or body suit may help.

If your dog is exhibiting any signs of pain or mastitis please contact the surgery and we would be happy to help.

Prevention

The best way to prevent a phantom pregnancy is to spay the dog. If treatment is required, it can often work out more cost effective to spay rather than treat a number of phantoms.

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