

Dogs bear their litters roughly 9 weeks after mating, although the length of gestation can vary from 56 to 72 days. Labs may average as many as 12 pups in each litter. The number of puppies also varies with the mother's age and health, the father's sperm count, the timing of the breeding, and many other factors

The estrous cycle of the bitch contains four distinct stages that can be followed cytologically (Table 1). These stages include proestrus, estrus, diestrus, and anestrus. For some simplification and indication of which structures predominate throughout the cycle, these four stages may be grouped into the follicular phase (proestrus and estrus) or the luteal phase (diestrus and anestrus). The bitch frequently has been classified as monocyclic or having a reproductive cycle that lacks frequent, recurring periods of heat and has a long period of anestrus regardless of pregnancy status.

Cycle Stage	Length	Clinical Signs
Proestrus	About 9 days	Vulvar edema and swelling, bloody discharge
Estrus	About 9 days	Less edema, discharge becomes clearer

Proestrus: Usually lasts about 9 days. This is the time that will precede the time of actual breeding. You will notice a bloody discharge and swelling of the vulva.

Estrus: Usually lasts for about 9 days. During this time the bitch will stand for the dog, and actually will seek out males and stand for them prior to copulation. The interval between successive cycles is typically seven months.

You may expect puppies from 56 to 72 (8 to 10 weeks) days from the date of conception.