

Why Do Dogs Show Behaviour Changes When They Are in Season and How to Support Them

If your normally independent, sweet-tempered pup has suddenly transformed into an anxious, shadow-following velcro dog—or conversely, an irritable nester who wants absolutely nothing to do with you—it can be incredibly jarring. Facing a female dog’s first heat cycle brings a wave of unpredictable moods that leave many owners feeling completely out of their depth.

These radical shifts aren’t behavioral defiance or a sudden loss of training. When a female dog goes through her heat cycle, her body experiences a massive surge and subsequent crash of hormones. Recognizing the biological triggers behind dog behaviour changes in season is the first step toward transforming a stressful household ordeal into a manageable, bonding experience for both of you.

Typical Dog Behaviour Changes in Season

Hormonal fluctuations affect every dog differently. While some pass through their cycle with minimal fuss, the majority of intact females display at least two or three of the following behavioral modifications:

1. Intense Clinginess & Velcro Behavior

Driven by a sudden spike in estrogen, many female dogs seek constant reassurance from their trusted humans. You might find her whining at closed doors, crying when you leave the room, or physically leaning against your legs throughout the day. She is searching for a baseline of safety as her internal chemistry shifts.

2. Irritability & Sudden Mood Swings

Just like human hormonal cycles, a dog in season can experience genuine physical discomfort, cramping, and pelvic pressure. This can translate into a lower tolerance for noise, sudden movements, or sibling pets. A dog who usually loves rough play might growl or walk away to seek isolation.

3. Nesting Instincts & Restlessness

As the cycle progresses into the luteal phase, progesterone prepares the mind for potential motherhood. You may notice her obsessively rearranging her bedding, gathering specific toys into her crate, or pacing restlessly around the house trying to find the “perfect” secure corner.

4. Roaming Tendencies & Escapism

Biology is a powerful driver. During the fertile window, her primary instinct is to find a mate. Even the most perfectly trained, reliable dog may suddenly bolt out of an open door, dig frantically under fences, or ignore recall cues entirely when she catches the scent of a male dog down the street.



The 4 Stages of Heat & Behavioral Alignment

To support your dog effectively, you need to know exactly which hormonal wave she is currently riding. Use this verified structural matrix to map her symptoms:

CYCLE PHASE	PHYSICAL INDICATORS	PRIMARY BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES
1. Proestrus (Days 1- 9)	Swollen vulva, dark red bleeding, frequent self- grooming.	Alert, nervous, tucking tail, displaying clingy behavior toward owners while aggressively rejecting male dogs.
2. Estrus (Days 10- 18)	Discharge turns pinkish- tan or watery; softening of tissue.	The fertile window. Intense flirting, “flagging” her tail to the side, highly restless, and determined to roam or escape.
3. Diestrus (Days 19- 60)	Swelling completely subsides; discharge stops.	Hormones normalize or shift into a false pregnancy state. Marked by deep nesting

		behaviors, lethargy, and protective instincts over toys.
4. Anestrus (Months 4- 5)	No visible physical signs.	The resting phase. Behavioral baseline returns to normal, stable everyday patterns.



How to Practically Support Your Dog

Your primary objective during her season is to drastically lower her environmental stress while keeping her physically locked down and safe. Here is how to execute a flawless support plan:

- ✓ **Establish an Absolute Leash Sanctuary:** Never, under any circumstances, let her off-leash during her proestrus and estrus phases. The biological urge to mate will completely override her standard training. Avoid dog parks entirely to prevent male dog altercations.
- ✓ **Provide Low-Stress Mental Stimulation:** Because long, public walks are too risky and stressful right now, burn her energy indoors. Utilize lick mats, snuffle mats, and puzzle toys stuffed with healthy, high-value rewards to tire her brain out without elevating her physical anxiety.
- ✓ **Respect Her Need for Retreat:** If she shows signs of irritability or nesting, set up a quiet sanctuary room or crate equipped with comfortable blankets. Teach children and other family members to leave her alone when she chooses to rest in her designated zone.
- ✓ **Manage Hygiene with Patience:** Physiological diapers are an excellent tool to protect your furniture, but many dogs find them restrictive and stressful. Introduce the diaper slowly with positive reinforcement, and remove it during her supervised outdoor breaks to allow

for natural grooming.

Pro-Trainer Tip for Multi-Dog Homes:

Scent masking sprays or a dab of diluted menthol on her tail can help hide the estrus smell inside the house, but it is never a substitute for physical separation. Intact males can smell a female in season from miles away and will go through doors or drywall to reach her. Keep them completely separated by multiple structural barriers.

A Temporary Emotional Storm

Navigating dog behaviour changes in season requires shifting your perspective from frustration to biological empathy. She isn't acting out; she is simply riding out an intense endocrine storm. By maintaining strict safety boundaries, offering peaceful enrichment, and giving her the physical space she asks for, you can successfully steer her through her cycle with minimal stress.