

Why Does My Dog Act That Way And How To Decode It

Watching your female dog experience her season for the first time can be confusing, especially when her behavior suddenly changes. Hormones play a big role during this period and can affect her mood and energy levels. She may become more attached to you, seem unusually restless, or react differently than usual. Understanding that dog behaviour changes in season are a completely natural part of her reproductive cycle can help you stay patient and make small changes at home to keep her relaxed and secure until the season passes.



The Four Phases

A dog's season isn't a single event but a journey through four distinct phases. Each phase brings its own set of hormonal signals that dictate how she interacts with you and the world around her.

1. Proestrus (9-11 days)

The "Intro" : Physical changes begin, often accompanied by moodiness.

Proestrus: The Early Warning Signs

This is when you'll first notice physical changes like swelling. Behaviorally, she may become more reactive to other dogs, nervous, or even grumpy. She might lose her appetite or start marking her territory more frequently with small amounts of urine.

(Pro Tip: Keep a calendar to track these days. It helps predict her next cycle!)

2. Estrus (5-9 days)

The “Active” phase: She is fertile and her behavior becomes intensely focused.

Estrus: The Active Search

Hormones are at their peak. Her behavior often shifts from ‘avoidance’ to ‘seeking.’ She may become hyper-focused on smells, try to escape the yard to find a mate, or become intensely affectionate with her owners. This is the highest risk period for unplanned pregnancy.

(Pro Tip: Keep a calendar to track these days. It helps predict her next cycle!)

3. Diestrus (60-90 days)

The “Settling” : Hormones stabilize, but nesting instincts may kick in.

Diestrus: The Restorative Phase

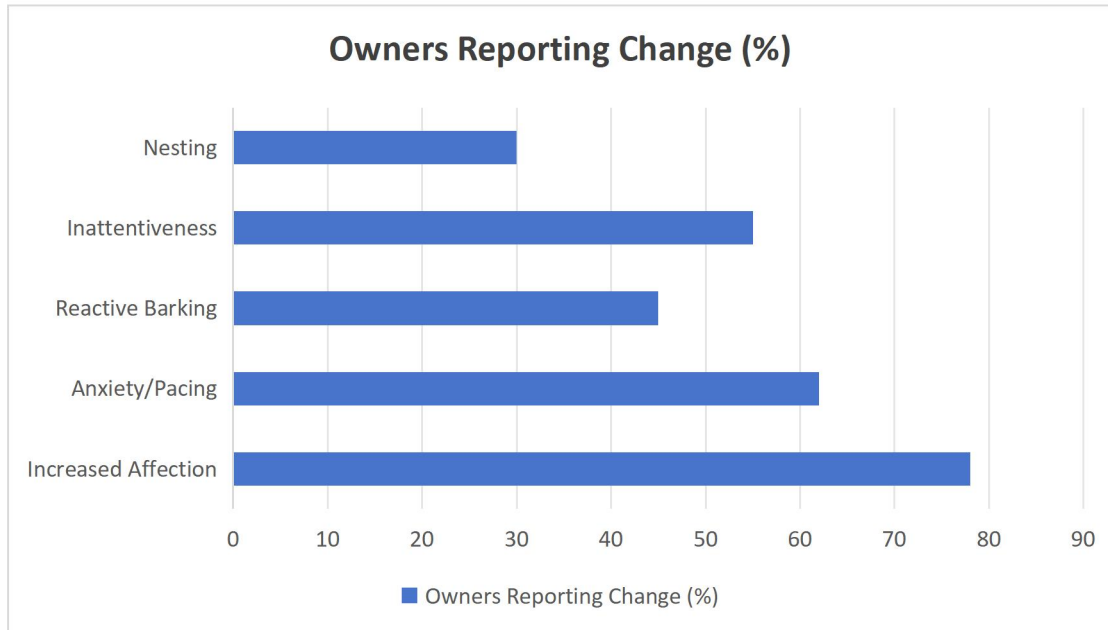
Even though the outward signs disappear, her body is still under the influence of progesterone. This is the stage where ‘False Pregnancy’ (Pseudo-pregnancy) can occur, where she might mother toys or become very protective of her bed.

(Pro Tip: Keep a calendar to track these days. It helps predict her next cycle!)

Behavioral Shift Frequency

Data collected from veterinary surveys indicates that certain behaviors are far more prevalent during the heat cycle than others. Understanding these common dog behaviour changes in season helps prepare for what's ahead.

Top 5 Behavioral Changes Reported (%)



Clinginess & Affection

Over 70% of owners report their dogs becoming “Velcro dogs” during the early stages of their heat cycle, seeking constant physical reassurance from their trusted humans.

Restlessness

Many dogs experience a spike in cortisol alongside sex hormones, leading to pacing, frequent whining, or an inability to settle in their usual sleeping spots.



Decoding the Symptoms

When you observe physical or social shifts, it is helpful to connect the specific symptom with its biological trigger so you can respond with the right support.

SYMPTOM	THE “WHY”	MANAGEMENT TIP
Excessive Grooming	Increased discharge and localized irritation.	Ensure she has a quiet space to clean herself without being watched.
Aggression to Males	Protective instinct during the Proestrus stage.	Keep her away from dog parks and off-leash areas entirely.
Crying/Whining	High anxiety caused by hormonal spikes.	Calming pheromones or soft music can help soothe her nerves.
Roaming Instinct	Driven by the biological urge to find a mate.	Check all gate latches and use a harness instead of just a collar.
Appetite Changes	Nausea or hormone-induced lack of interest.	Try warming her food or adding a high-value topper like plain chicken.

How to Be the Best Owner During Her Season

It's easy to get frustrated by a dog who is suddenly ignoring her recall or whining at 2 AM. However, remembering that these dog behaviour changes in season are an involuntary biological process is key to maintaining your bond.

Safe Outdoor Time

Never leave her alone in a yard, even if it's fenced. Intact males can be incredibly creative and persistent when they catch the scent. Stick to lead-only walks in quiet, low-traffic areas.

Hygiene Management

Doggy diapers can help keep your home clean, but ensure they are changed frequently to prevent irritation or UTIs. If she hates wearing them, don't force it—use washable covers on her favorite furniture instead.

Comfort First

If she is nesting, let her. Provide extra blankets or a quiet corner where she won't be disturbed by children or other pets. Mental stimulation like "sniffari" scent games can help distract her from discomfort.

Watch for Pyometra

After the season ends, keep a close eye for signs of lethargy, excessive thirst, or discharge. Pyometra is a life-threatening uterine infection that can occur in the weeks following a heat cycle.

A Final Word of Encouragement

Navigating a dog's season is a test of patience, but it's also an opportunity to deepen your connection. By recognizing that her temporary "naughtiness" is actually hormonal confusion and her "neediness" is a search for safety, you can provide the stability she lacks internally.

Stay observant, keep her safe, and remember that in a few short weeks, her hormones will settle, and you'll have your usual companion back by your side.

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