

What is involved in freezing semen and what are the answers to the most common questions?

What are the advantages of frozen semen?

Frozen semen allows international distribution of genetics and is far more economical and convenient than shipping the dogs themselves. This has valid application for all breeds where in-breeding coefficients are high in certain countries. Canine owners prefer the convenience of frozen semen over the necessity of always being on call for cooled semen collections, especially if their canine has a competitive career or experienced collection facilities are not available close to their home farm. Many canine owners simply use frozen semen as an insurance policy in case their canine dies or is injured such that he can't be collected for cooled semen. Since the frozen semen is shipped in dry shippers that can maintain temperature for 2-3 weeks, canine owners like the advantage of being able to order the frozen semen ahead of schedule so it is on hand and readily available at the time of ovulation.

How much semen should I freeze?

Canine owners new to frozen semen generally freeze about 8 doses or vials, conservatively enough for 8 breeding's. Once they have a better indication of the use and demand for their frozen semen they can schedule subsequent freezing accordingly. The average canines produce about 4 doses of frozen semen per ejaculate. The number of doses produced per ejaculate depends on the total sperm production of the individual canine and can range from 0 to 30 doses/ejaculate.

How long does frozen semen last?

There have been studies that suggest frozen semen may last as long as 50,000 years without decay because it is kept at such cold temperatures. We can look to the bovine industry who have been using frozen semen successfully for the last 40-80 years. However, the key to maintaining frozen semen is conscientious monitoring of the liquid nitrogen level in storage tanks to ensure semen is consistently stored at the correct temperature.

What is a Dose of Frozen Semen?

A dose of frozen semen is an insemination unit of “x” number sperm per unit used. The straws contain a specified concentration and volume of semen such that when thawed and combined, the “dose” of semen constitutes one breeding insemination for a dog. Often times with straws more than one straw is needed to equal enough sperm for one dose. In vials the semen is packaged in the vial every time to equal enough sperm for one dose. The “dose” of semen should include enough viable sperm to provide a reasonable chance of obtaining a pregnancy in an appropriately managed, reproductively sound dog.

Can't the Analysis of Semen Quality Vary with the Laboratory Processing the Semen?

Yes, this is a very important factor to consider. Post-thaw motility may vary depending upon the method of analysis, the time and temperature of incubation and the extender used for dilution. Consequently, a post-thaw analysis performed at one laboratory may provide completely different results from a post-thaw analysis from another laboratory.