

## THE MATING GAME by John & Miranda Blake

The following is a description of the actual process of mating a Rough Collie dog to a Rough Collie bitch. There are difficulties in this process, regarding Rough Collies, that are not necessarily present when mating dogs and bitches in other breeds.

Also, we have never used progesterone tests or ovulation kits, as we have always had plenty of males who let us know when the bitches are in season and getting towards being ready to mate. If you do not have a male, then they can be helpful.

Using the AI method of getting a bitch in pup is gaining popularity, but it is basically a lazy way of accomplishing this task. It also does away with the pleasure that the animals get from a natural mating.

So, why do we need the bitch to tie the dog? The simple answer is that we do not, but the proper answer would be, because unlike any other animal the bitch's eggs are fertilised in the ovary. For almost all other animals the eggs are released into the uterus, where they are fertilised by the male sperm.

Therefore the bitch is mated when she is showing colour, or in other words her uterus is being cleaned out ready for the next batch of eggs, which will be released once they have been fertilised. Other animals showing colour from the vulva means that they are not going to have babies, as this shows their uterus being cleaned out. Dogs are also different from many other animals in that they only come into season at the best, every six months and very often only once a year. Cows for instance come into season every 3 weeks when they have a colourless discharge. And of course, for humans it is every four weeks.

The vagina on the bitch is closed tight until she is ready for the mating. It is not possible to mate a bitch, either with a dog or by AI at any other time.

Now for the actual mating. The bitch can only be mated when she is ready, which is usually 10 to 13 days after she has started to discharge the red mucus. So be prepared to act once you have noticed that the bitch is in season. It helps if you have a dog as she will try and present herself to the dog when the time is right.

Rough Collies are difficult because of the amount of hair that gets in the way when the dog mounts the bitch. Therefore we always try to handle the dog and guide him into the bitch.

Occasionally a dog will refuse to be handled. He thinks that he can do the job best. **Ch Corydon Handsome Hotspur** was one of these awkward animals. He just would not come near the bitch if she was being held. Fortunately, he was rather good at this until a bitch with a really very heavy long coat came to him. There was no way that he could get past this coat, but we had a brainwave and tied up her skirts with strong rubber bands. Once this had been done, he mated her first time. So strong rubber bands are part of our arsenal.

Now for the nitty gritty part. Those of a squeamish nature look away now. To establish that the bitch is ready for mating you put on rubber gloves and put a good dollop of Vaseline on your forefinger (left or right, depending on your dominant hand). Smear this round the outside of the bitch's vagina, then very gently put this finger into the vagina. If the bitch is ready for mating your finger will penetrate easily. Do not push your finger in if you feel resistance. Wait another day.

Having assured yourself that the bitch is now fully open and is ready to be mated, kneel down by the bitch's side having made sure that someone else is holding her head. (You do not want to be bitten at this stage as you are rather vulnerable). The safest way for the other person to hold her head is to grip her neck with their knees and hold her head with their hands behind their knees. Then she cannot hurt the handlers or the stud dog.

Using one hand under the bitch put your fingers either side of the vagina. This is to help you guide the dog's penis into the vagina. Allow the dog to mount the bitch and start to work. As you feel his penis between your fingers just hold them there and the dog will enter easily. As soon as he has entered and begins to work seriously put your other arm round the back of him so that he cannot slip out of the bitch. Now the hand that was guiding him in can feel to find if he has swollen inside the bitch. This means that there is a proper tie, and you can now relax the arm holding him on so that he can then turn. (With a maiden bitch this can take a couple of minutes before she has tied.) Let him go to one side where he will lift his foreleg over the back of the bitch. Now lift one of his hind legs over the bitch so that he can face the opposite direction to the bitch. Hold the root of both tails until the bitch releases the dog. It is she who does the releasing.

The tie can last from 5 minutes to 90 minutes, but it is normal for a tie to last between 10 and 20 minutes. Once the bitch has released the dog, lift the hind legs of the bitch off the ground. Just for luck. This helps the sperm to reach the ovaries! During the tie, if the bitch is going to be a good brood you will notice her back wrinkling as her muscles pull the sperm forward.

We often repeat the mating after 48 hours if the bitch is still flagging her tail and open.

Equipment:

- Vaseline
- Rubber gloves
- Elastic bands
- Muzzle
- Knee pads
- Disinfectant (wipe the dog down afterwards)
- 2 chairs

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