

Some constraints and opportunities in the privatization of animal breeding services in Kenya

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Abstract

Data relating to reproductive parameters of German shepherd bitches were collected from registered German shepherd dog (GSD) breeders with information kept over a 15-year period (1982-1997). The information obtained was verified using the East African Kennel Club records. A total of 594 bitches from 280 breeders were recorded. From these, 798 heats were observed, 594 of which were used for breeding, resulting in 3592 puppies. The mean age at puberty was 519.0 +/- 41 days. Heats occurred throughout the year, although significantly ($P < 0.05$) higher and lower incidences were observed in October and April respectively. Pregnancy significantly ($P < 0.01$) increased interoestrous interval, which was 247.8 +/- 99.6 and 183 +/- 52 days among bred/pregnant and non-bred bitches respectively. Most bitches in oestrus (73.7%) were bred, and breeding was carried out throughout the year, with a distribution closely related to that of heat incidence. Subsequently, whelping occurred throughout the year, and 95.5% of the bitches that were mated whelped. A mean gestation period of 60.6 +/- 5.1 days was observed. The mean litter size was 6.4 +/- 0.4 puppies, and did not differ significantly between months. The preweaning losses were low, with 2.3% stillbirths, 0.9% culls and 11.4% mortalities.