



Bio Vet Innovator Magazine

(Fueling The Future of Science...)

Volume 3 (Issue 8) AUGUST 2026



World Mosquito Day – 20th August 2026

Popular Article

False pregnancy in Canines: It's Management

Azeefa Mujawar¹, Boddupalli Ayesha² and Badugu Abhay Kumar³

¹Department of Veterinary Gynaecology and Obstetrics, Veterinary College Hebbal, KVAFSU, Bidar

²Department of Veterinary Anatomy, Institute of Veterinary Science, Siksha 'O' Anusandhan Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar

³Department of Veterinary Gynaecology and Obstetrics, College of Veterinary Science, Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, India

*Corresponding Author: mujawarazeefa@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21965983>

Received: August 10, 2026

Published: August 12, 2026

© All rights are reserved by Azeefa Mujawar

Abstract:

false pregnancy is the most common term used to describe this clinical case in bitches. It is prolonged luteal phase of non-fertile induced ovulatory cycles. Low level of progesterone results in elevated serum prolactin this predispose the female dogs to false pregnancy. Furthermore, in bitches the signs of clinical false pregnancy are comparable not so much to those of pregnancy but to those of the peripartum and postpartum periods and lactation. The ultimatum strategy to get rid of false pregnancy is ovariohysterectomy.

Keywords: Bitch, false pregnancy, canine, canine reproduction, pseudocyesis

Introduction:

False pregnancy is also known as pseudopregnancy or pseudocyesis. Pseudopregnancy is a normal physiological consequence of canine reproduction. A bitch with normal reproductive physiology actively cycling enters dioestrus after ovulation if not mated. This dioestrus, or luteal phase, is difficult to distinguish from pregnancy in many respects physiologically and hormonally. The pregnancy and luteal phase length is similar, usually lasts for roughly around 2 months. Hence, all normal non pregnant bitches experience false pregnancy after oestrus. There are two categories of pseudopregnancy one is physiological pseudopregnancy and another is clinical pseudopregnancy. False pregnancy has been described as a primeval or imperceptible pack behaviour. The tendency for dogs to cycle together results in subordinate bitches ending diestrus at about the same time that a dominant bitch would end her pregnancy. The objectionable obvious signs of clinical false pregnancy are mammary disorders the result of declining progesterone concentrations at the end of dioestrus coupled with elevated concentrations of oestrogen and prolactin. Mammary gland development can occur in response to the prolonged progesterone stimulation during dioestrus, and lactation is begun by the rise in prolactin. Signalment overt false pregnancy can occur in intact post puberal bitches of any age. It usually occurs 1-3 months after

Citation: Azeefa Mujawar, Boddupalli Ayesha and Badugu Abhay Kumar. (2026). False pregnancy in Canines: It's Management. In Bio Vet Innovator Magazine (Vol. 3, Issue 8, pp. 24–26). Bio Vet Innovator Magazine. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21965983>

oestrus. It also may occur after OHE of the diestrual bitch or after cessation of exogenous progestogen therapy. Spayed bitches suffering from ovarian remnant syndrome also may experience false pregnancy.

Clinical Signs:

Clinical signs of a pseudopregnant bitch include mammary gland enlargement and galactorrhoea (inappropriate lactation), variation in appetite, nesting behaviour, and adoption or mothering of objects or animals, less common signs like emesis, diarrhea, polyuria, polydipsia, and polyphagia. Abdominal distention sometimes may be observed, and many clients are convinced that their bitch is pregnant. In rare cases rare bitch may become extremely agitated or aggressive. The duration of false pregnancy varies greatly but may last as long as 4-6weeks. Most physical examination findings are normal. The only common exception is galactorrhoea, an enlargement of the mammary gland with the presence of a milk like secretion. Mastitis may occur rarely and should be treated as for the lactating bitch. Finally, and obviously, the bitch is not pregnant.

Diagnosis:

Diagnostic tests and results serum progesterone concentrations are low or declining. No pups are seen on radiographs or ultrasonograms. Serum relaxin concentrations are imperceptible, as opposed to being elevated in the pregnant bitch after 3-4weeks of gestation. Thyroid function should be evaluated in any bitch with clinical signs of mammary disorders suggestive of hypothyroidism and galactorrhoea; elevated thyroid releasing hormone concentrations in the hypothyroid bitch may stimulate prolactin release.

Treatment:

No treatment is necessary for dogs with mild signs of false pregnancy. In the absence of nursing pups, the condition usually is self-limited. Physical stimulation of the mammary by the bitch or owner should be avoided because it may boost milklet-down and prolong the lactation. For this same reason, it may be wise to remove any adopted object from the bitch. A mild restriction of food and water also may hasten the end of the lactation, as may wrapping of the mammary glands with an elastic bandage. Owners who object to mild signs of clinical false pregnancy should be cautioned that a recurrence after the next estrus is possible if not likely. Spaying the bitch after the remission of clinical signs will prevent a recurrence of the problem. In cases in which mammary development is excessive or the behaviour is particularly objectionable, more aggressive treatment measures may be necessary. Hormone replacement therapy with androgens, estrogen, or progestogens has been used with variable success. All hormonal therapy entails significant risk to developing fetuses, so pregnancy must be definitively ruled out before any treatment is begun. It is a progestogen that suppresses the signs of false pregnancy initiated by the progesterone withdrawal at the end of diestrus. The recommended dosage of megestrolacetate is 2.5 mg/kg/day given orally for 8 days. Recurrence of clinical signs after therapy has been discontinued is

common. Progestogen therapy should be avoided in dogs with diabetes mellitus or mammary neoplasia. The serious side effects associated with estrogen therapy in the dog precludes its use as a treatment for a condition as relatively begin as false pregnancy. Androgen therapy is a safer choice, and the weak, synthetic androgen mibolerone at a dosage of 16 /mg/kg/day, has been used to treat false pregnancy. Drugs that block the secretion of prolactin, either serotonin antagonists or dopamine agonists, also have been effective for treatment of false pregnancy in the bitch. The serotonin antagonist, cabergoline at an oral dosage of 5 /mg/kg/day for 5-7 days, has been reported to effectively suppress signs of false pregnancy in most dogs. Bromocriptine, a dopamine agonist, at an oral dosage of 30 /mg/kg/day for 16 days, also has been reported to mammary Disorders effectively treat the signs of false pregnancy. Emesis is a common side effect of bromocriptine therapy. If an affected bitch is so aggressive as to require sedation, dopamine antagonists such as acepromazine or haloperidol should be avoided because they will cause an increase in prolactin release. A 4 to5 day course of diazepam can be effective. Clients should exercise caution with aggressive dogs and limit their exposure to people and other dogs until the condition improves. Prognosis False pregnancy is not associated with infertility or any other diseases of the reproductive system. It should be regarded as a normal condition resulting from the unique physiology of diestrus in the dog. Recurrence during subsequent cycles is possible and can be prevented with OHE.

References:

- Allen WE. (1986) Pseudopregnancy in the bitch. The current view on aetiology and treatment. J Small Anim Pract. 27:419-424.
- Arbeiter K, Brass W, Ballabio R, Jochle W. (1988) Treatment of pseudopregnancy in the bitch with cabergoline, an ergoline derivate. J Small Anim Pract. 2:781-788.
- Bevers MM, Schaefers Okkens AC. (1991) Pseudopregnancy in the dog. Tijdschrift voor diergeneeskunde. 116:700
- Concannon PW. (1986) Canine physiology of reproduction. In: Burke, T (ed.), Small Animal Reproduction and Infertility. Lea and Febinger, Philadelphia, USA, 327.
- Feldman EC, Nelson RW. (1987) Canine female reproduction. Canine and feline endocrinology and reproduction.
- Feldman EC, Nelson RW. Canine and Feline Endocrinology, Reproduction, 2nd edn. WB Saunders, Philadelphia, USA, 1996.
- Jochle W. (1987) The sexual cycle in the bitch: recent insights and impact on therapy and reproduction. Tiera Prax. 15:295-300.
- Johnston SD. (1980) False pregnancy in the bitch. In: Morrow, DA (ed.), Current Veterinary Theriogenology, 1st edn. WB Saunders, Philadelphia. USA, 623-624.