Short gestation length in Cavalier King Charles spaniels
Department of Clinical Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC

The Cavalier King Charles spaniel (CKCS) is a toy breed that ranks as the 19th most popular dog breed by the American Kennel Club. There has been anecdotal evidence from breeders of CKCS that their bitches consistently whelp early. In this case series, the gestation length of 17 CKCS bitches was evaluated based on timing of the luteinizing hormone (LH) surge. As a control, the gestation length of 17 bitches of other, non-CKCS breeds was evaluated in the same manner. The bitches selected for the control group included a Lucas terrier, Tibetan terrier, French bulldog, English springer spaniel, border collie, Airedale terrier, Nova Scotia duck tolling retriever, Labrador retriever, Polish lowland sheepdog, German shorthaired pointer, Briard, black and tan coonhound, German shepherd dog, Gordon setter, Doberman pinscher, Rottweiler, and a great Dane. The date of the LH surge was estimated as the date at which progesterone was measured between 2.0 and 3.0 ng/mL. Gestation length was compared between groups using a Wilcoxon Rank Sum test. Gestation length for the CKCS bitches was calculated to be 62.8 ± 2.0 days (range = 60 to 66 days) whereas the gestation length for the control group was calculated to be 64.5 ± 1.4 days (range = 62 to 68 days). The difference between the two groups is statistically significant (p < 0.05). On average, the gestation length measured for the CKCS bitches was 3.2% shorter than the reported canine gestation length of 65 days from the LH surge. This difference has clinical implications for pregnancy management of this breed, including recommendations for scheduling a timed cesarean section and approaches to managing late-term complications.