

Tails are up at Taiwan's first canine sperm bank

幫愛犬留種 寵物精子銀行夯

Dog hotels and dog hairdressers are already well established, but a new service for the nation's pampered pooches, the country's first canine sperm bank, is sure to set a few chins — and tails — wagging.

At the Taipei franchise of the American-owned International Canine Semen Bank, doggie sperm is routinely extracted and then frozen in liquid nitrogen so it can be used for artificial insemination years or even decades later. But dog lovers should take note — this high-end canine service is more expensive than the human equivalent.

The Taiwan branch of the International Canine Semen Bank opened its doors earlier this year. Yang Chuan-yi, a technician at the clinic, says that the service has been available in the US for over 40 years and that so far more than 50 dogs have deposited their semen at the Taiwan branch. The majority of the dogs belong to private owners, with the remainder coming from professional breeders that wish to preserve special breeds of dog.

There are many reasons to keep a pet's semen. An owner of a nine-year-old male Labrador found a perfect match for his hound, but the female was too young to breed. Calculating that the male would be too old to mate with the matching female by the time she reached breeding age, the owner decided to collect its semen for future use. Some owners save their dogs semen before neutering it, while others want to create a "backup" in case their pet passes away unexpectedly.

The semen bank technicians say the best time to collect a dog's semen is before it turns five years old. The semen is then kept in liquid nitrogen at -196°C, in much the same way as human umbilical cord blood is preserved. The procedure isn't cheap, with the collection procedure costing around

NT\$10,000, plus an annual fee of NT\$3,600. For human sperm collection, a private clinic in Taiwan charges about NT\$6,000 for the first year of storage, which includes the fee for the medical check up, while some hospitals charge as little as NT\$3,500.

Yang says it takes about 10 minutes to collect the semen, with big dogs capable of producing as much as 15ml, whereas smaller ones can struggle to produce just 2ml. The collection procedure involves the vet massaging the dog's genitals while a special contraption is attached to the animal's penis to simulate a female.

Yang says shy dogs are sometime unable to produce a sample in an unfamiliar environment, whereas ferocious dogs are sent to play with a bitch in heat to let off steam before starting the collection.

Besides sperm banks, other novel services that today's pets can avail themselves of include body massages and customized health food products. Mei Kuo-hua, a spokesman for the China Productivity Center (CPC), a body that represents small and medium-sized businesses, says there are 18 people who hold the international pet massage certificate and who currently ply their trade in veterinarian clinics and pet beauty parlors.

Wang Pei-hsien, a pet masseuse, says dogs are allowed to choose the scent they like, which is then mixed in aloe essence and used during the massage sessions. Massage not only helps the animal to relax, but also relieves the pain from joint problems brought on by old age.

One massage session for a small dog lasts 20 minutes and costs NT\$300, while it's 40 minutes and NT\$600 for big dogs. Since the service was launched at one pet beauty parlor, five to six dogs have already become regular clientele.

(LIBERTY TIMES,

TRANSLATION AND ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY TAIJUNG WU)



狗 旅館和狗美容已不稀奇，寵物精子銀行首度進軍台灣，這項新服務勢必掀起話題。

總部在美國的國際犬精子銀行進軍台灣市場，利用液態氮冷凍保存取出的狗精子，待數年甚至幾十年後再作為人工受孕之用。但值得愛狗人士注意的是，取愛犬精子的費用可是比儲存人的精子還貴。

國際犬精子銀行台灣營運中心今年進入台灣。技術服務部的楊川儀小姐指出，犬精子銀行在美國成立已經超過四十年。在台灣已有超過五十隻狗狗存精，以私人飼主居多，其次的就是繁殖場為名貴犬種留種。

儲存愛犬精子的原因有很多。有個飼主養了一隻九歲的拉布拉多犬，找到了一隻母犬幫牠配種，但因母犬年齡太小、還不適宜育種，又擔心等愛犬真正要跟這隻「董養媳」交配時會力不從心，於是先留種以待日後之用。有些犬主在愛犬結紮前留種，也有人希望愛犬離世後，還可以擁有牠的下一代陪伴。

業者表示，狗狗最佳的存精年齡是五歲前，取精後，以攝氏零下一百九十六度液態氮保存，跟人類臍帶血的保存方式差不多。不過，寵物存精價格可不便宜，光是取精以及保存前的處理就要約一萬元，每年還要另付保存費三千六百元。跟人類保存

精子比較的話，國內私人診所第一年只要六千元，這包含檢查連同保存費，而有些醫院每年只收三千五百元保存費。

楊川儀表示，人工取精過程大約十來分鐘。大型狗一次多達十五毫升，小型狗只有兩毫升左右。取精時獸醫以手指按摩公狗的生殖器官，同時以特殊的容器套在公狗的器官上，模擬與母狗交配的感覺。

楊川儀說，有些害羞的狗因對環境不熟悉，所以不會有反應。有些狗比較兇，所以必須先讓牠跟發情的母狗玩一下，再正式取精。

除了專屬精子銀行，現代寵物還能享受舒壓按摩、專屬營養保健品。中國生產力中心休閒產業服務組梅國華指出，該中心開設的寵物按摩國際證照班目前已有十八人取得證照，分別投入獸醫院以及寵物美容業工作。

寵物按摩師王珮賢說，除了一般按摩，也還會讓狗狗選擇喜歡的香氣，然後將其混合在蘆薈露中按摩。除了舒緩情緒，也能藉此減輕狗兒因老化導致的退化性關節疼痛。

一般小型犬一次按摩二十分鐘、三百元，大型犬一次四十分鐘、六百元。某寵物美容院開業至今，已有五、六隻狗是固定常客。

(自由時報記者洪素卿/台北時報吳岱瑋)

Above: A dog stands next to a jar used for preserving canine semen in liquid nitrogen in this photo taken on July 8, 2010.

Left: A woman holds a device that contains canine semen at a press conference organized by the International Canine Semen Bank in Taipei on July 8, 2010.

PHOTOS: LIAO CHEN-HUEI, LIBERTY TIMES

上圖：七月八日拍攝的這張照片中，一隻狗站在攝氏零下一百九十六度的液態氮儲精桶旁。

左圖：七月八日，在台灣「國際犬精子銀行」舉行的記者會上，一名女性工作人員展示保存犬精子的設備。

照片：自由時報記者廖振輝攝