

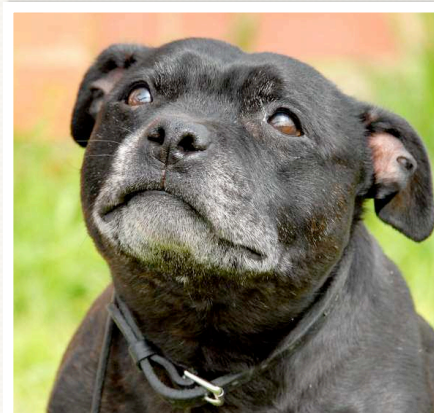
THINGS DON'T ALWAYS GO ACCORDING TO PLAN

Since being fortunate enough to make my lovely bitch Dot into a Champion (Ch Araidh Dot to Dot) my next objective was to have a litter of puppies with her. My eldest son has recently bought his own home and having been raised properly knows that the only breed of dog worth owning is a Staffordshire Bull Terrier. Fortunately his girlfriend agrees! Jason and Kate wanted a dog puppy which they would own but which they would let me show if he looked promising. With this in mind I made the decision to mate Dot to her nephew: a lovely dog named Hooli (short for Hooligan, which he is not!) Hooli is a son of my dog George, Araidh Good Intent. The union looked very good on paper and the two dogs complimented one another. Dot was swabbed and treated for a streptococcal infection. The mating went ahead as planned and four weeks into the pregnancy my vet confirmed that Dot was in whelp. Now we just had to await the happy day.

As had her mother before her, Dot gave birth with consummate ease; after a five hour labour we were the proud owners of four baby girls. Unfortunately there had been two other puppies but one little bitch was born with a cleft palate and hare lip, so did not survive and the one and only boy was born dead and despite my friend Debbie's heroic efforts we couldn't revive him. Sadly, Jason and Kate would not have their little boy this time, but you have to count your

blessings and Dot was well and so were her four babies. This was on the Wednesday evening. Thursday and Friday came and went and the puppies seemed to be warm and feeding well enough. Dot was rather anxious and unsettled but not at all unwell.

On the Saturday morning I was a bit concerned that Dot wasn't settling and one of the puppies wasn't suckling so well. The vet advised that I bring them along for a check up. Having been thoroughly checked Dot was pronounced well but given a calcium shot, an antibiotic shot and an oxytocin shot as a precaution. I picked up the unwell puppy to ask the vet to check her over and she was completely stiff, as though rigor mortis had set in. The vet could hear a faint heartbeat and gave the puppy an antibiotic jab, telling me that she probably wouldn't make it, but to take her home anyway, keep her warm and supplement her feeding as necessary. It was all that could be done. Sadly I took Dot and her puppies home. By the time we got home (half an hour) one of the other puppies which hadn't shown any signs of illness had died. I was devastated. During the rest of the day I watched the remaining three puppies carefully, feeding the poorly one with a syringe full of Welpi every hour and trying to keep her warm. Despite my efforts, the poorly puppy died during the Saturday evening. Now we had only two.



“The Vet was very surprised that an E-Coli bug had shown up..”



On Sunday morning the smaller of the two remaining pups wasn't suckling so well. Again I took to supplement feeding, but putting her to her mum's teat before each feed to see if she would suckle. By the afternoon she was stronger and was taking her mum's milk again. The bigger of the pups had been feeding well all along. Early Monday morning both puppies suddenly became chilled and quiet. I sat and cried. My darling babies were dying before my eyes and I couldn't do anything to stop it happening. I wrapped both the puppies in a piece of VetBed and laid them on hot water bottles to gently warm them. I weighed both puppies and to my surprise found that the bigger one, who had weighed 10oz at birth, now at five days weighed only 8 ¾ oz. Again I rang the Vet in desperation; she had little to suggest but I asked her if she thought I should perhaps take both pups away from Dot and bottle feed them as it seemed to me that even though the bigger one had been feeding from her Mum she hadn't been gaining any nourishment. The Vet agreed and so I started my Labour of

Love. The little pup was too weak and chilled and died at the Monday lunchtime. Now just one puppy left. Every two hours I fed her a small amount of Welpi from the Catac feeder I'd bought from the Rescue Stall at the Fun Day (funny how Fate works, isn't it?) She didn't appear to be getting much better, but she wasn't deteriorating either. Through the night and on through the next few days, gradually she did get stronger, taking her feeds well and gaining just a little weight at last. Of course, Dot wondered what was happening and I included her in the pup's care as much as possible whilst not letting her feed. Dot was responsible for the toileting habits and a grand job she did too.

Meanwhile the Vet did a post mortem on the first two puppies to die and found that they had slightly enlarged livers. She sent swabs and blood to the lab for testing and I took Dot along to have a vaginal swab taken for testing. While I was there I suggested taking a sample of Dot's milk to be tested. The

Vet said this wasn't a usual procedure but she would go along with my wishes. The following day the results came back from the lab. The Vet was very surprised that an E-Coli bug had shown up, both in the puppies liver swabs and in Dot's swab, and more importantly, IN HER MILK. In effect, she had been poisoning the puppies.

Katie, the surviving puppy, is now seven weeks old. She is fully weaned and a bonny and confident puppy. I have also survived the two hourly feeds, through the night, which led onto three hourly and now the usual four feeds a day. The experience was not one which I would like to repeat and it has been a very hard lesson to learn. Dot throughout this has been in good health, showing no signs of illness or infection. She is now swabbed and tested clear of the bug and the Vet feels that this was just down to bad luck and that I should mate her again. The plan is to swab her throughout her close season and treat her accordingly, then monitor closely through her next pregnancy for infection. With hindsight, at the first sign of things going wrong, perhaps I should have taken the puppies away from the bitch and fed them artificially, but I assumed that mother's milk was best. My advice would be check your bitch for infection. Have her swabbed before you mate her. You never know where she has picked up any infection, but act sensibly and steer clear of shows, training clubs, etc with in season bitches.

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