

## The Stud Dog by Brian Hawkins

Let us start with a question. Why would anyone want to keep a stud dog when for the price of a stud fee (relatively cheap in collies) you can travel and use someone else's and let them keep and feed it.? This was the way I always looked at the job. On the other hand, if you keep what you consider is the best from a litter of pup's then it is just possible that the best may be a Male.



This was the case when **CH Brilyn Supertramp** came along. Keeping a stud dog was not even on the agenda for a small premises, besides it was what more experienced breeder's did and not a novice with only three years of breeding under their belt.

Nevertheless, this is what happened. Perhaps more by luck than judgement the Male kept from the litter had two testicles which obviously are necessary! Nowadays we check from 3 weeks onwards.

I have known other breeder's /exhibitors to ring me over the years excited to tell me about the puppy they have kept, or their latest acquisition and it is surprising how many have not thought about these two most important items when asked. Fortunately, in the circumstances from the time I have been involved all has been ok. However, it is always worth checking because I know of one puppy coming in from abroad who had only the one testicle present. It is well worth asking in advance if you are purchasing a Male puppy. The only one I ever had a problem with was a dog called Tony who was sent to Lars Linden in Sweden. Now he was called Tony because he was a singleton pup. Tony was "T'only one", hence the name. He had two testicles but during the flight to Sweden one was taken up and left him with only the one descended. The vet had found two but sure enough on arrival in Sweden Tony had T'only one! I had a good relationship with Lars, and he trusted me and after a few weeks the testicle dropped.

The very first enquiry to use Tramp was by a long-time breeder so that was great. With having no experience, at least they would have an idea of how to go on. Not a chance. They had only ever kept bitches and had no idea of stud work. They had never kept a stud dog.

It was actually Ray Mitchell (Damiryan collies) and Maureen Colbourne (Sundorne) who taught me how to go on. How to prepare the bitch and hold her correctly for the dog. If you think stud work is easy - forget it! You must have a lot of patience, something I never had, but for stud work I do and particularly when starting off a young dog.

Each and every mating can be a learning curve, the people you meet and the bitches, which with most breeders can be fine. Then you have the, for want of a better description, "pet home bitches". Probably frowned upon these days but you would sometimes get people who just wanted to mate their bitch for a litter.

There used to be an old wives' tale that you should always let your bitch have at least one litter. After which she might be spayed. So, on the odd occasion you would get requests from outside our dog world to have their bitch mated. So, after a phone call, when you explained how the bitch could be ready around 13/14 days into their season, providing they had caught the first day. (This was often more luck than judgement). Sure enough on the day in question they ring then turn up on your doorstep with their bitch.

A couple of times when this occurred I remember well. Having somewhat more experience with stud work and a good rapport with Tramp when it came to stud work; he knew to wait until I held the bitch ready for mating before attempting in earnest to mate the bitch.

A women from Wolverhampton once booked in and she came along with a friend in tow. Luckily the bitch was bang on ready and sure enough Tramp did the deed with little instruction from myself. Once the mating was over, I suggested that perhaps they might take the bitch back "for seconds". They were very impressed how things had gone and asked if they could bring their husbands along to watch. Made me smile.

Then on another occasion under similar circumstances another lady owner did not want to see the mating. She went and sat on the loo and did not come out until the deed was done.

On another occasion someone made the journey for a mating by train and bus. Not a problem. I put them on the Bus for the journey home later realising it was the wrong Bus! Feeling sort of responsible it was decided to drive and try and catch said bus. After spending some time checking out every Bus for the next half hour driving around, I gave up on the search only to find out later that they had realised they were on the wrong one and had changed to the right one before departure.

Sometimes with more experienced breeders, to make the travelling easier a meeting somewhere to do the deed was arranged. So "have stud dog will travel". Obviously, the KC ruling of no matings within the precincts of the show were always followed. There is no statement regarding layby's a mile or so from the show or Motorway services or graveyards for that matter. One or two excellent specimens of the breed were conceived in the most unusual places. Interestingly, enough most were from a single mating. Nowadays everyone seems to be disappointed if they do not get at least two mating's yet looking back I do think fertility issues were not quite the same has now, but then again, we did not keep consistently trying with the infertile bitches like people seem to do now. We also worked without that so-called safety net of science and I think the level of stockmanship, where observation is king was greater without the dependence of blood testing etc.

Now just a word of warning if you do decide to meet up at a Motorway services. When you are sat down having that coffee after a successful mating and discussing the deed, try and keep your voice down. It can be somewhat embarrassing when the table next door to you hears you discussing how you or the owner of the bitch did an internal to see if she was open. Joe public might not understand and if reported (more than probable these days) explaining to the law might be difficult.

Over the years I have found that each and every dog responds slightly differently to matings. This also seems to be a family thing. You can have the "wham bam thank you mam" approach from some who just ask you to hold the bitch and will try regardless. This I have found is the more dominant dog's approach and although easy to work with they will try and mate a bitch whatever stage the season and with people often bringing their bitches early running the risk of mating too soon.



Then I have had others who will not even look at a bitch unless she is bang on ready. These are less “bull at a gate” in approach and think about what they are doing. **CH Brilyn Rum n' Black** was very much like this. He would almost feel his way and was a gentleman with the ladies.

Dog's would also seem to work relative to the bitch the had last, in other words if you had a problem with a pet bitch on the last mating, they tend to be a bit cautious when

approaching the next one.

Dogs that have been used for AI matings also can present a problem. I first encountered this with Brilyn Goldfinger when he came back from Sweden. They tend to stand back away from the bitch and although climb on to mate will take a while to be close enough to penetrate the bitch.

So just a few of the experiences I have had over the years. I started this by asking the question. “Why would anyone want to keep a stud dog?”

I would say now, do not keep a stud dog but keep a dog that is an excellent specimen of his breed. One that is bred well and if all is right, he may eventually become a stud dog. However, do not use him just because he is there. Just because you have run a dog on does not mean he necessarily suits the bitches you have, although I personally do not see any point in running on a dog if he is not a fit for your own breeding.

I do not think we will ever repeat the days of the Top Stud Dogs of the past. Mr Chips, Arrester, Sandknocker and the like. With the attitudes of today it is just not possible that any dog can emulate them. Nowadays a dog must be “all singing all dancing” tested before some will even consider using them. Then others are waiting until the dog has puppies in the ring in order to see what he is throwing. Well if no bugger uses the dog waiting for these things then it will never happen will it? So, we have a chicken, egg situation.

If you want to see what a dog can produce then look around and see his siblings, his parents and whatever you can deduce from a pedigree. If they are not up to what you want, move on and find one that has got quality in the family lines.

When people say there are no decent dogs about in UK that really gets my goat. They are there, but are they given a chance these days? This just tells me that whoever makes such a statement has no idea where they are going and no comprehension of the dogs available.

Chinese whispers are the kiss of death for any dog and if you own a stud dog it is a prime target for such. If you want to know anything about a dog go directly to the owner and ask them straight. The whispers around Supertramp's father were enough to put off anyone using him, and nothing has changed much since the 70's in this respect. Too many experts and even more so now with social media.

Also always remember that if something might crop up, the puppies “only have a father”. The mother is not mentioned.

So basically, I am saying you may hear many things but take each with a pinch of salt until you actually know the truth from the owner.

It is not in the interest of the Stud dog owner to have bitches which have been mated to their dog miss. Always remember that when you take a bitch for mating.

Do not think a long tie is necessary. I have seen matings where the dogs tied for 3 mins and produced good size litters and I once did a mating for someone with a German Shepherd, mated twice and both times tied for one hour and the bitch missed.

Many people panic to get their bitch mated too early. I remember Mrs Franklyn (Patttingham) many moons ago booking into Tramp. "It is ok she is ready, and I have a couple of days and I must go shopping today, so I will be with you tomorrow" she said. At the time I thought this was a bit laid back, but the Lady was a vet as well as a Collie Breeder. She got her litter by the way.

So, to sum up if you own a stud dog you need to have lots of patience and a sense of humour; the ability to understand your dog's pedigree and the animals around it. Get it right and it will give you a sense of pride when your dog's offspring are successful. Even when you are stood behind them in the show ring!

Photo acknowledgement Brian Hawkins/Lene Newman

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