

Breeding, Whelping, Choosing Your Puppy, Rearing and Training It.

By John & Miranda Blake, Corydon Collies.

We have reared more than 700 puppies during the last 60 years. In this article we are going to try to tell you how we do it.



Just Born

What is your puppy for? Will you want to show it? Is it for a pet? Is it for breeding? Is it for all three?

Where is the puppy coming from? Are you going to breed it? Or are you planning to buy it?

So many questions and they are all important.

Let us start at the beginning and assume you want to buy a Rough Collie puppy that you would like to show, have as a pet and possibly breed from.

The first thing to decide is whether you want a bitch or a dog puppy.

Our advice is, that if this is going to be the first Collie puppy you have ever had, would be to buy a bitch. Dog puppies do require a lot more expertise to rear than a bitch.

Having decided the sex of the puppy, the next important decision is where to go to buy the puppy. Are you ambitious to go to the top in showing and breeding? If so, then your best plan is to contact one or more of the present top breeders to see if they have any puppies available. Try to go to as many of these kennels as possible and ask to see the dogs they have in the kennel. This way you can make up your own mind as to which kennel has the most attractive dogs from your own perspective.

Once you have made up your mind as to which kennel you would like to buy from, and they have puppies available, have a look at the litter.

Depending on how large the litter is, making a choice can be difficult. If the puppies are eight weeks old, they will all look extremely cute and loveable. Get down on your knees and call the puppies to you. They should all come running towards you and jump on you. If one or more hang back, then discard them from your selection. Is there one who is much smaller than its litter mates, but seems to be the friendliest? Again, you must discard this one if you want a puppy that is going to win. You might well feel very attracted to this little one, but it is only ever going to be of pet quality, unless it is very expertly reared.

Now examine the rest of the litter in more detail. The first to discard is the puppy who already looks like an adult Collie. It will never turn out correctly as it will become fine and over exaggerated in most of its form.

The head at this age should be quite square, with a big round skull, a deep stop and big full foreface. The chin should be strong. The ears should be on the upper side of the head and the eye shape should already be almond shaped and dark, giving a particularly good expression, even at this early age. The body should be round and fat with the legs being strong and straight. Have a look at the tails. A well



One day old

reared puppy will have a very thick tail root. If there are two puppies who meet all these criteria the one to choose is the puppy that has the most attractive markings.

Unfortunately, you are probably not going to be allowed to buy the pick of litter. Especially if this is going to be your first puppy. We have never knowingly sold the pick of any litter unless we did not want to keep any of the puppies from a particular litter.



Corydon Moon Goddess at 3 weeks

The alternative way of getting a puppy is to breed your own. First you must obviously have a bitch to breed from. Your bitch might not be particularly good from the show point of view, but by being careful and clever you can quite easily breed yourself a very good representative of the breed. A very well-bred bitch that is not of top show quality will often produce better Collies than her more illustrious sister.

First study your bitch's pedigree and find out as much as you can about the dogs and bitches in the pedigree. Especially important are the 14 Collies in the first three generations. Try to see as many of these in the flesh as you can. Photographs are alright but they can be tampered with, giving a very false impression. Read as much as you can about these dogs. If they have been shown and won, there should be reports by the judges on these dogs. Find out what they think of the dog.

Have a very serious look at your bitch. If possible, take her to a few shows; this will help you to compare her with other bitches in the ring. Ask the judge for their opinion of your bitch. Ask for an honest opinion. It is no good being flattered with: "It's got a nice head and moves quite well." This tells you nothing about your bitch. You need to know where she needs to improve. If you do get an honest opinion you will be armed with the information you need for finding a suitable stud dog. You will now have to have your wits about you as every stud dog owner you contact will swear



blind that their dog is absolutely ideal for your bitch. This is where the homework really starts as you are going to have to look at a lot of dogs and more importantly, their offspring. Here again, going to dog shows is really a must and the more Championship Shows you can attend, the better.

At last, you have selected the stud dog you would like to mate with your bitch. Please realise that most of the puppies you produce will be going to pet homes. This means that you must not consider a dog that has this soft woolly coat that we see all too often and winning at shows. This type of Collie is not any good for the pet market as the pet owner cannot manage this type of coat. Remember that the pet owner wants his Collie as a pet which means long walks in the country and getting caught in rain and sun. The pet owner will thank you and come back again if they have no problems with coat type.



Make sure that your chosen stud dog has been hip scored and eye tested. In this more litigious age, we must consider the very real ramifications of the sale of goods act. If one of your puppies goes blind or suffers from bad hip dysplasia you might find yourself in court and facing huge damages if you cannot prove that you have done all you can to make sure that the puppy had a healthy start. It goes without saying that you have had your bitch's eyes and hips tested. If the result on either of these is bad, the best plan is not to go ahead with mating this bitch. Get another one instead and hope for better results. Rough Collie hips are generally very good as they have one of the lowest averages of all breeds on hip scores. PRA in eyes is almost a thing of the past, but colobomas

tend to rear their ugly head when least expected.

This is where you must be polite and ask the owner of the stud dog if they are willing to let their dog serve your bitch. Hopefully, they will agree with this and then give them a due date on which your bitch will hopefully start her season. It is not good practice to phone the stud dog owner and inform them that your bitch is in season and will be ready for mating the next day. Remember that most stud dog owners have a day job. So, if your bitch is ready for mating on a Tuesday you might well have to get the job done in the evening. We like to have a bitch mated at least twice and possibly three times with a day in between each mating.

Great, the matings have been done and now the longest nine weeks of your life starts. No. 1 tip here. If she is housed in a kennel and runs with male dogs, keep her away from them until she has finished with her puppies.

No. 2 tip; do not take her to any shows once she has been mated.

The gestation period for a bitch is 63 days. Unfortunately, we have never had a bitch who has read this fact. Our bitches have had litters just 56 days after mating and others have had their litter 70 days after the big event.

For the first six weeks feed the bitch her normal daily ration. With three weeks to go we start to increase her daily feed gradually until the last week when we give her as much as she will eat. The puppies inside her are growing rapidly by now and she needs all the nutrition you can give her. Let her have plenty of exercise but do not take her for long walks on the lead. This will just exhaust her and will not do her unborn puppies any good at all. Do not let her get lazy. Collie bitches are notorious for being lazy. Their one and only ambition apart from food is to crash out in front of the fire.

There is a way to avoid sleepless nights when the magic 63 days has arrived. Take her temperature each day before feeding her (her temperature will rise after feeding) for about a week before she is due to whelp. The normal temperature for a dog is 101.5 degrees Fahrenheit which is about 38.4 degrees Celsius. But a bitch in whelp will have a slightly lower temperature (100.5F/37.7C). Just before whelping, her temperature will drop to about the same as human temperature (98.6F/36.8C)

The next few days are the most important time for any breeder. Get it right and the World's your oyster. Get it wrong and you will live to regret it for the rest of your days.

So, get everything ready. Do not trust to chance. If you think you might need a clean towel get three, you will need them.

We like to whelp our bitches in the kitchen. For one thing it is often the warmest room in the house and there is no carpet on the floor. Whelping is a messy business, so make sure that you have access to hot water (kitchen again). We put layers of newspaper on the floor and cover this with veterinary bedding. We have a heat lamp hanging over this area. The puppies must be kept warm.



Corydon The Ringleader

The bitch will start to strain, which can go on for some time. Eventually her water will break, and she will get up to pass this. Now things start getting serious. The bitch will strain in spasms. Like three good strains and then a rest for a few minutes. The period between strains will get shorter and shorter until the first puppy starts to appear. At this point it is good to try to help the bitch to produce the puppy. You get hold of the puppy and when the bitch strains, you gently pull down towards her hind legs. This should not last more than a couple of minutes. The puppy should come out at a rush. Then you quickly remove any membrane from the head and let the bitch cut the cord and eat the afterbirth. This way you know that the afterbirth has come out and the feed value of it to the bitch is extremely high. If the afterbirth is still stuck inside the bitch, very gently pull it out making sure that you pull downwards. Doing it this way it usually comes out with no problems. Let the bitch lick the puppy, which she will do

naturally until the next puppy arrives. After a few puppies have come out there is often a quiet period before it all starts again. This is because one uterus horn has been emptied and the next one is getting ready.

Always have a bowl of cold cow's milk diluted with a little water available which you frequently offer the bitch. We find that they seem to prefer this drink to just cold water.

Unless a very weak puppy is born, do not try to dry them. A healthy puppy will start to feed from the bitch long before all the puppies have been born. We keep a tub of potassium permanganate close by in case the bitch will cut the puppies cord too short which means that it might bleed rather too much. A quick dab of this product stops the bleeding and is not harmful if the bitch licks it. If the bitch seems to be clueless when the first puppy is born, you might have to cut the cord yourself. Do not cut it with a knife or scissors. Separate the cord by us using your fingers and gradually scraped with your fingernails.

It only takes a moment to achieve this and it prevents the cord from bleeding which it will do if you cut it.



Corydon Victor Ludorum

When the last puppy has arrived, the bitch will visibly relax. In our experience the last puppy is more often than not the biggest in the litter and a male!!! If you are sure that the last puppy has indeed been born offer the bitch some warm milk. Make sure the puppies are happy and warm, and then go to bed. It is very rare in our experience for a bitch to have her puppies at a sensible time during daylight hours. Ours nearly always start at midnight and finish about 2 am. Make sure that the bitch is relaxed and comfortable and that there are no cold draughts near the litter. But before you do go to bed have a good look at the puppies and try to select which is the one you like the best. If you have an eye for a dog the best one will be easy to pick. If you are not confident about your prowess in selecting at this stage, look for the one who has the most Bull Terrier type of head. It always amazes us that what we consider to be the best puppy is either the first or last born. From our experience the

best at this time is almost always our choice when they are eight

weeks old. We do not look at the puppies from a show point of view between these two ages. We just try to enjoy them as they grow without forever comparing one against the other.

From birth to eight weeks is a very long time in a puppy's life and considerable changes take place. One puppy will suddenly advance more quickly than its litter mates only for them to catch it up and probably overtake it in just a couple of days. Changes from day to day can be very dramatic, which is why we ignore their show potential until they are eight weeks old. Our choice at birth is invariably our choice at eight weeks and this is the puppy we will keep.

After you have slept for a couple of hours it is time to get up and make sure the bitch is comfortable and check to see that the puppies are feeding. Collie puppies are by nature very small in comparison with almost all other breeds. This means that for the first 48 hours they need constant supervision. Once the puppies are dry, we move them into the whelping quarters where I have a whelping box ready for them. This should be in a draught proof room or kennel where the bitch can be kept quiet and relaxed. It is most important that the puppies are warm and dry. If the puppies are slow to dry there must be a problem. Does the bitch have any milk? Try squeezing a teat. If the milk squirts out, then this is not the problem. Make sure that the puppies are warm enough. Turn up the heating in the room where the litter is. The mean temperature should be in the high eighties Fahrenheit, which is very hot for us. The puppies must be kept at this temperature for at least the first week. You can gradually lower the temperature until the puppies are three weeks old. At this age they can regulate their own body temperature.

While the puppies are suckling, the bitch should receive the very best food you can afford to buy. And give her as much food as she will eat. The bitch will produce a considerable quantity of milk. For a large litter it can be quarts of milk a day. So feed her the very best. If she has 5 or more puppies, we also add a daily calcium supplement while she is lactating. This helps to prevent any chance of eclampsia.

REARING YOUR PUPPY

Finding the right food is not a problem nowadays as there are some very good well- made dog foods available. There are big differences between the very best and the feeds meant for working dogs. In my experience feeding the very best always pays in the end. I want big healthy strong puppies.

The bitch will hopefully supply all the puppies needs during the first three weeks or until the puppies start moving around. It is now you can start to experiment with different feeds for baby puppies. Again, there are many excellent Starter rations available. We use Royal Canin Medium Starter food. From 3 to 5 weeks, we soak it in hot water and mash to make a porridge. From 5 weeks – when they have teeth – we feed it dry. We leave this down for the puppies to eat at their leisure while the bitch is away from them. We pick it up when the bitch comes in to feed them as we do not want her to eat it. Often the bitch would eat this with relish and could even attack her puppies if they should go near this food. So, pick it up and keep it away from the mother. Always, always have fresh water available. Dry food will swell up a lot and could easily dehydrate the puppies if there is no water available.



Corydon Persnickety Miss

The bitch is typically with her puppies until they are between 5 and 6 weeks. Then she needs to dry off. You will need to examine the bitch frequently to make sure that she is not still producing milk and getting a very hard udder. If this should happen then put her with her puppies so that they can suck her dry. Then you have to start all over again. Cut the amount of food you give her dramatically. She does not need nearly so much as when she was nursing, and by reducing her feed intake she should dry off quickly. Once her udder has gone back to normal size, examine her to see if she has lost weight. Some bitches that produce a lot of milk cannot eat enough food to keep their natural weight. If you think that she has lost weight during lactating obviously you are going to have to give her more food until her weight has returned to normal

Three weeks is first worming time. A messy but essential job. We use Drontal Puppy Suspension. Ten days later is worming time again and repeat in another ten days. This should be sufficient for the next few months. We find that by the time of the second worming the puppies are eating solid food and for some reason their feed intake is boosted just a day after being wormed.

Cut the toenails of the puppies frequently. They do get very sharp and can cause some nasty scratches on the bitch's udder.

Give the puppies small dog toys to play with. This helps to stimulate their minds and muscles.

When the puppies are four weeks old, they are going to be moving around rather a lot, which means that the whelping box can be discarded, leaving much more space for the puppies to run around.

We use a proprietary cardboard whelping box which we dispose of when the puppies have finished with it. Much the most hygienic and safe way. We use the 36inch square Petnap one.

If the weather is good the puppies can be introduced to the big outside World when they have reached five weeks of age.

Eight weeks and now is the time really to give the puppies a good going over. You will now have a very good idea as to which is the most promising and which are the puppies who are not going to be good enough to show seriously.



Put the puppy outside as soon as it has eaten the food. This way it will associate the outside with its ablutions, whether it is kennelled or is a house dog. More important, let it out last thing before bedtime. Collies are naturally very clean dogs, so help them to get into a clean kennel/house habit.

Play with the puppies every day. This way they will get used to human contact and any puppies going to new homes will be much better adjusted enabling them to settle into their new homes very quickly. Your customers will be very satisfied.

Always have dog treats in your pocket. Dogs love to be praised if they have been good, and nothing pleases them more than a treat. We always call them sweeties and the puppy will very quickly associate “sweeties” with coming to us when we call it.

Have the puppies’ eyes checked for CEA and PRA before they are 12 weeks old and certainly before they leave for their new homes. Any puppy that has a coloboma must be registered as not to be bred from. Those with mild CEA will probably go normal as Collie eyes seem to be slow developing to normal status.

Do not introduce your puppy to the lead too soon. Our puppies do not see a lead until they are four months old. We are lucky in that we have large paddocks for the puppies to get exercise. For those who have only a small garden we would suggest taking them to a secure field or park where they can have some off lead exercise. The trick here is not to take them for long walks on the lead before they are fully grown. Then we take our young dogs for a brisk two-mile walk. This firms up their muscles and gets them used to walking in a straight line.

Do not groom your puppy too often. Once a week is fine. We have known puppies to have no undercoat at all because their owners were too energetic with the brush and comb.

If your new puppy or any puppy for that matter lives with you in the house there will be a lot of chewing of table legs, chair legs etc. This gets worse as the puppy starts to lose its first teeth and the permanent ones come through. No. 1 Tip: find a small round log. We find puppies do really like to chew this type of log. Saves a lot of damage to furniture. If the puppy persists on chewing one particular item, spraying it with disinfectant can be a successful deterrent.

No. 1 deterrent though is to try to prevent the puppy from being bored. So, plenty of soft toys to play with.

No. 2 main tip. Let the puppy have lots and lots of sleep and rest. Puppies do need a lot of sleep time. We must remember that humans are really the only mammals that do not sleep for 20 hours a day.



They can be very adorable

Rearing puppies for the next few months is an absorbing task. They will eat a lot, sleep a lot, play a lot and be jolly good fun. They will start to get their second and permanent teeth at about three months of age. This can go on for some months and when the big back teeth start to come through the puppy will want to chew on anything it can find as this process obviously causes some discomfort. So, beware. The puppies’ ears will probably become pricked, usually one at a time so that the head looks lopsided. Do not worry about this as the ears will almost certainly settle back into the correct position once the worst of the teething has finished. Also, the eyes are likely to become stuck up with mucus. Do not take the puppy to the vet when you see this. It is normal during teething. Just gently wipe the mucus away with cotton wool. Again, this problem will stop once teething has stopped.

The puppy must be micro chipped by 8 weeks of age.

Puppies must also be vaccinated from 8 weeks of age. We use the L2 vaccination.

The puppies we run on at Corydon do not have their first vaccinations until they are 4 months, but we do live in a rural location where they do not meet other dogs. We do not boost our dogs annually, unless they are being shown overseas, or there is an outbreak of parvovirus in the locality. We thoroughly disinfect the dogs and equipment after each show with Formula H. This is also our disinfectant for the kennels.

To keep your puppy/adult healthy, cleanliness is key – clean food and water bowls (scrubbed daily). Clean garden (poop removed daily) and clean kennels/bedding. Plenty of fresh air and ventilation are vital too.

Lead training!!! This can be a real problem with some puppies. Wearing a collar from an early age will help them become accustomed to the feeling of a lead. Little and often is the key, with the puppy following a biscuit or 2 will get the puppy walking calmly. Even better if you have an older companion they can be walked with whom they can copy and follow. It usually takes a week to lead train one of ours fully, with each session lasting no more than 15 minutes, with plenty of treats and praise.

Ours are show trained from as soon as they have teeth and can eat a gravy bone – just get them to look at it, then reward immediately, so they begin to associate “look” with showing their ears. Just a few of these sessions is all we need for them to be trained for life – do not spend too long at this or the puppy will be bored and will not enjoy showing.

I do not attempt showing on a lead until they are lead trained. By then they already know to stand still and lift their ears for a treat, or the word “look” followed by a treat. Shows for our dogs are special times and they love the attention, and they want to perform.

We wish you the best of luck for a wonderful, fulfilling life with your collie.

This piece and the photographs therein are the property of the author, and may not be reproduced or shared without permission