



## So You Want to Breed Your Female?

*Article By Bob Franklin, CT*

A year or so ago you got a nice female Jack Russell puppy that your kids named "Muffie" from a Jack Russell breeder and she is now bleeding and having her second heat cycle. Uncle Charlie and your mother-in-law just love Muffie and both want a female Jack Russell just like her. The kids favorite TV program is "Wishbone" and they are clamoring for you to get another JR, a boy this time. You think it would be good for the kids to witness the birth and raising of puppies and you yourself wouldn't mind making a little extra cash from the sale of the puppies. So you say to yourself, "Why not, let's have a litter of puppies!"

WHOA! Stop for a moment. Let's take a look into the future and see what could happen before you embark on this MAJOR undertaking.

You realize you need to find a boy dog to be the father of these puppies. You guess you should have paid more attention at the JRT trials you attended to find out who has a nice, potential daddy that Muffie would like. But since you didn't you call the breeder who sold you Muffie or you get out your JRTCA Breeder's Guide and make a few calls. After several calls, you learn from one of the breeders that you should have BAER tested your bitch for her hearing (you have now learned that "bitch" is what female dogs are called) and that breeder further explained to you what "BAER testing" means. You also learned that you need to have your vet do a Brucellosis test on Muffie (whatever the heck that is, but it sounds fancy enough). One of the Stud owners (you now know "stud" is what a daddy dog is called) even asked if your bitch has been CERF tested and you have no idea what that means either. By now your bitch is trying to hump the baby when it is on the floor and she tries to sneak out the door ever time someone comes in.

If you are lucky, you find a stud only 200 miles away. Since it has already been seven days since Muffie ruined your best pants with the blood dripping from her hind end, the stud owner tells you to get her to him NOW or you will miss this heat cycle. You have no idea what type of puppies the potential stud produces, but you decide to go for it anyway. You take a day off from work; drive the bitch to your vet to draw blood for the Brucellosis test and drive on to the stud's home. You realize that you forgot to take any of Muffie's food with you when the stud's owner informs you that you will have to leave Muffie for a week or so while he breeds her. He wants you to fax the Brucellosis results since he won't breed Muffie until he knows that she is negative. The breeder is also disappointed that you didn't bring a copy of Muffie's pedigree. You make a note to fax that as well.

So far you have spent \$20 on all the phone calls even at 10 cents a minute, the Brucellosis test cost \$35 and at 30 cents a mile it cost another \$120 just to drive Muffie to the breeder. In addition, you either lost a day of your vacation or you lost a day of wages for another \$150 cost. These puppies have cost you \$325 already and your bitch has not even bred yet! Oh well, at 500 bucks each for the puppies you will surely get that back quickly. Another couple of phone calls, plus another trip to the breeder to pick up Muffie, plus a \$450 stud fee that you had to pay up front means that you have dropped another \$525 (you picked Muffie up on a Sunday so you didn't loose another day of work). You now have around \$500 invested and all you can do now is wait and hope Muffie is pregnant.

Life with Muffie again settles back into its normal routine. Four weeks go by and you can't see any change in Muffie so you call the stud's owner. The stud's owner suggests that you have an ultrasound done to tell if she is pregnant. The sounds kind of neat so you call your vet only to find out he does not have ultrasound equipment, but he knows a horse vet that does. You make an appointment with the horse vet and spend another \$100 dollars to find that you have four maybe five puppies in the hopper. At least it was fun to see their little hearts beating even though it was an expensive 20 minutes of entertainment. You are so excited that you even forget to add anything for the cost of driving your car to the horse vets.

More time passes and at about six weeks of pregnancy, Muffie almost overnight begins to look like a blimp with a head, a tail and four toothpick legs attached. She begins to look at you occasionally with that, "Boss, what did you do to me?" look. You realize that Muffie is now feeding not only herself but the puppies as well, so you gradually increase her food intake. You have asked the stud's owner when you can expect the puppies and he gives you a first possible date, but he admits that it could be anywhere from 57 to 68 days from the first breeding. The stud's owner suggests several books for you to read to try to understand the whelping process. You ask, "What is whelping?" and are embarrassed to learn that is what they call giving birth to puppies. So much for you ever making a bundle on the Jeopardy quiz program.

Anyway, you can't get the suggested books at the library so you drop another \$40 at the bookstore to purchase the suggested books. But, you are so busy the only time you can read the books is after you go to bed and after about three pages you are asleep every night -- so you don't really get all that much read. One of the books does suggest taking the bitches temperature twice a day starting a week ahead of the expected whelping date. You invest another \$10 in a new, digital thermometer because somehow you rebel at the thought of putting the one you now have back into your kid's mouth after having inserted it into Muffie's rectum several times to take her temperature. You are now up to \$1,050 invested in these puppies.

The twice morning and evening ritual now is finding Muffie to take her temperature because she quickly realizes that she doesn't much like you poking things in her rear end. You find that her temperature bounces all over the place between 101.5 degrees and even as low as 99.5 degrees. How the heck are you supposed to detect a drop in her temperature when it bounces around like that? Finally, on day 62 it drops to 99 degrees, so maybe she is on her way. The book says within 24 to 36 hours from the initial drop you could have puppies. Since it could have dropped just after you took the temperature the last time, you could already be only 12 hours away. Anyway, you prepare the whelping box you bought out of a catalog for \$90 and you put a bunch of towels in the box. Muffie quickly makes herself at home. You decide that you had better stay up with her so you spend an uncomfortable night on the floor beside the box, but nothing happens. Muffie's temperature is back up to 99.9 degrees the next morning, but by that evening the temperature has dropped to 98.5 degrees. She must be getting close!

During the day Muffie just lays around looking about as miserable as she can look. One time when you take her out to pee, she disappears underneath the deck and you panic and beg her to come back out. You can just see yourself tearing off some floorboards to get her out before she has puppies. She wants to go out to relieve herself every half hour or she just goes on the rug inside. She has always been perfect with her house training before, but now she seems to have no control at all. If you get her really quiet and lay your hand on her tummy, you sometimes are rewarded by feeling little fluttering movements like one of the puppies kicking. Muffie begins to nest and quickly shreds the towels you put in her whelping box. You then realize you should have used old rags instead of your good towels. Chalk up another \$10 for the towels that Muffie ripped up while nesting. You are now up to \$1,150 invested in these puppies.

Finally, at midnight the second night you spend on the floor beside her, she starts to pant and really gets restless. After an hour of thrashing around she seems to be having some contractions. You have been watching her and have been reading the books you bought trying to figure out what Muffie is doing and the first sign of contractions is exciting. By 2:00 AM still no puppies so you call your vet. The vet finally calls back after half an hour and there are still no puppies. The vet says not to worry, just wait until Muffie has had contractions for at least three hours.

Around 3:00 AM a black looking bubble appears out of her vulva and you get all excited. After an hour of Muffie pushing and nothing much happening that bulge of fluid breaks and she seems to relax. After another half hour of intermittent pushing, you call the vet again and he suggests taking Muffie for a walk on lead. You do so and when you get back in, she starts more labor. Finally a bulge appears under her tail and something like a foot appears out of her vulva. She strains and strains and the foot keeps popping in and out, but nothing more. You call the vet again around 4:30 AM and when the vet finds out that she has been in labor since 1:00 AM he/she sighs and says to meet at the vet's office in 15 minutes. You quickly bundle Muffie up and take her in the car to the vet.

The vet examines Muffie and gives her a shot to help stimulate contractions. He even pokes his fingers in her vagina. She gets upset when he does this, but it does seem to stimulate contractions. Finally the vet is able to grasp that errant foot and pull. Muffie shrieks and out pops a cute little female puppy. The vet begins to rub the puppy vigorously but there is no response. He hands the pup to you and says, "Give it mouth to mouth resuscitation." Finally after one-half hour of working with the pup, the vet listens for a heart beat, sighs and tells you, "I guess we lost this one, sorry." Your heart seems to break as you look at this beautiful, lifeless puppy. If only you had insisted on going to the vet earlier or if you had read your book better, you might have prevented this from happening. You decide to leave the puppy at the vet for disposal so the kids don't have to go through this same trauma.

Since Muffie is frantic searching for the missing puppy, she isn't doing anything else like having more contractions for the next hour and a half, so the vet finally suggests that in order to save the rest of the puppies a "C" section is required to remove them. You agree so the vet whisks Muffie off to his surgery room and tells you to stay in the waiting room. By then it is 8:00 AM and a vet technician has arrive so the vet commences with surgery and after an hour comes out and announces that Muffie has had four more puppies - all males - and they are doing fine. So much for the females that Uncle Charlie and your Mother-in-law wanted!

After paying the \$800 bill for the "C" section plus the disposal fee for the dead puppy, you dimly register that you now have \$1,950 invested in these puppies. You sigh and finally take Muffie and her litter home. The kids are really excited about the puppies, but you realize that they didn't see anything about their birth so didn't learn much about that part of the experience you had hoped for. The kids want to play with the puppies, but Muffie has other ideas and won't let them near the puppies.

You are exhausted after loosing two nights of sleep so you tell the kids to behave and you collapse into bed and completely forgetting that Muffie probably needs something to eat and certainly something to drink. However, because you have ensconced Muffie and the puppies in the spare bathroom she manages to drink out of the toilet. You finally rouse and realize that she needs something to eat. You call the stud's owner to report and he suggests that you get a scale to be able to weigh the puppies twice daily to be certain they are gaining weight. He further suggests that you put a heating pad under the whelping box. You already have a heating pad but no scale so you stagger out to the drug store and drop another \$50 on an electronic scale bringing you up to an even \$2,000 spent on these puppies. Ugh, so much for making money on them.

By day two it is obvious that the smallest of the puppies is not gaining much weight. You carefully take that puppy to the vet. After examination, your vet gives it some fluid by inserting a needle in the skin on the top of the puppy's neck. He suggests that you tube the pup since it is too weak to even nurse from a bottle. He collects the equipment, opens a can of milk substitute and shows you how to tube the

puppy. You pay the bill of \$80 for the office visit, shot, milk substitute and tubing equipment and home you go. You tube the puppy every two hours, but sometime in the night it dies. Again your heart breaks as you look at the beautiful puppy that died because you didn't get it to the vet on time. This time you and the kids take the puppy to the backyard and bury it in the garden. The kids are crying and asking why and you feel miserable.

At day four, you take the remaining three puppies back to the vet for tail docking. Muffie goes along and is wildly frantic each time one of the puppies is taken away for its "operation". While you are trying to control Muffie, the lady across the waiting room with the toy poodle comes over and says it is much easier on the bitch if you do the tails and the dew claws yourself at home. She promises to tell you how to do this if you ever have another litter of puppies and she gives you her telephone number. You drop another \$100 at the vets before you can leave with Muffie and the puppies. You are now up to \$2,180 spent and you now have only three puppies. Who ever said you could make money by having puppies!! You go back six days later to have Muffie's stitches removed, but this time it is no charge. Yippee!

The puppies do nicely for a while and everything seems to be going well. Muffie is eating nearly three times as much food as normal and your spare bathroom begins to smell like a kennel because of the puppy smells and because Muffie seems to poop and pee every time she turns around. But one Sunday afternoon when the pups are about 4 weeks old, Muffie seems to be especially agitated and nervous. You try to calm her, but she even starts to shiver all over. Finally she seems to be having convulsions so you panic and call the vet. After relating the problem to the vet's answering service, your vet's associate finally calls 20 minutes later. He says get Muffie to the vet office NOW and he will meet you there. You rush to the vet with the kid in the back seat screaming and crying that Muffie is shaking uncontrollably. The vet takes one look at Muffie and gives her a shot. After 10 or 15 minutes, Muffie seems to relax and becomes more normal. The vet tells you that she experienced eclampsia, or a calcium deficiency, because she was not getting enough calcium from her food intake and the drain on her system, providing the milk for the puppies cause her to have a high fever and threw her into convulsions. If the calcium shot hadn't gotten into Muffie when it did, she could have died. He tells you to give Muffie lots of cottage cheese, ice cream or yogurt as well as calcium tabs to be certain that she gets ample calcium intake. He also says to start weaning the puppies immediately. This is another \$80 in vet costs so you are now up to \$2,260 not counting all the mileage expense of all the trips to and from the vet office and the extra dog food Muffie has consumed.

A couple of nights later just before going to bed, you check on the puppies and notice that they seem to be in some distress and one even seems to have pooped what looks like a small sheath of angel hair spaghetti. You panic and call the vet, but his answering service refers you to an animal emergency clinic in a neighboring town since they have a vet on call 24 hours a day. You call and they say to bring the pup in and give you the driving directions.

You get lost a couple of times, but finally arrive at the emergency animal clinic. After sitting in the waiting room amid a couple of dogs that seem to have been hit by cars, and a man with a cat that is yowling uncontrollably, you finally see a vet who looks like she just graduated from high school. She looks at the spaghetti you brought in and says "round worms". Have you been worming the puppies? You admit that you did not know that you needed to worm them. The vet gives each puppy a shot as well as some fluid in the neck because the pups are pretty badly dehydrated. She tells you that the mother probably is infected with round worms and the puppies got infected through the mother. She tells you to worm the mother as soon as you can. The vet also says she thinks the pups will probably be okay, but be certain that they have plenty to drink and begin giving them a series of worming drops. After paying the \$100 bill you limply drive home and wonder why you ever wanted to have puppies in the first place.

At week six you take the pups to your vet for their first puppy shots. You have been talking to the stud's owner about the BAER testing and the suggestion has been made to ask your vet where you can

get the pups BAER tested. Your vet says that the only place he knows that can do BAER testing is the state vet school 150 miles distant. You pay your vet \$80 for the shots and had home. You mentally tally up and realize that you have now spent \$2,440 and you are not through yet. A telephone call to the state vet school gains an appointment the next week, which means you will have to take another day off work.

The trip to the state vet school with the puppies vomiting, pooping and screaming in their crate seems to take forever, but you finally make it. The BAER testing is fascinating with the wires and computer involvement. The puppies hate it and protest vigorously. You watch the screen and see the wiggly lines on the first two. However, on the third puppy, on of the lines is almost a straight line. The testing vet re-inserts the little wires under the puppy's skin on its cheek and the top of its head and tries again with the same results. He looks at you almost apologetically and says "This puppy is deaf in its left ear." You can't believe what you are hearing, "What do you mean deaf, it hears just like the others," you say. "Sorry, it does not hear on its left ear, but the right ear has normal hearing." The vet responds. After paying the \$80 bill, the drive home seems even longer. This cost plus another \$90 for the car expense plus another \$150 for the lost wages puts you up to \$2,760 spend on these @\$#% puppies. There goes the vacation money!

A call to the stud's owner reveals that deafness does exist in Jack Russells and that is why he had asked if Muffie's ears had been tested. "Maybe Muffie is unilaterally deaf too," he comments. "My stud had been BAER tested okay." However, the breeder further says, "The good news was that a unilaterally deaf dog can live a normal life. Just be thankful that the puppy wasn't totally deaf." You then make a mental note to have Muffie BAER tested at the next JR trial that you attend which has a BAER clinic.

About this time you wish you had never considered having a litter of puppies. You wish that someone had written an article like this to warn you of the potential problems of having puppies. You vow in the future to leave the breeding aspects of dog ownership to someone who knows a whole lot more than you do!

Epilog from the author: Every one of these "incidents" has happened to the author - some several times, some even more severely and some others we didn't even list. These others are some of the genetic problems like heart murmurs, cleft pallet, luxating patellae, bad bites, high toe, etc. all of which we have had over the years. We still cannot get used to seeing that perfectly beautiful puppy lying there lifeless after you have done all you can do to save it and have failed. Veterinarians tell us this is why canines and felines have litters since all do not survive. The only liberty the author has taken is to combine several of these disastrous events into just one litter. However, breeding puppies is seldom a money making proposition and anyone breeding a litter must be able to cope with the many problems that can occur not only financially, but emotionally as well.