

Taffy's Story

As told by Steve Thein, Collie rep

Has this ever happened to you? A call comes in from a shelter that they have a stray purebred dog. The shelter says she is a nice dog, very friendly, gets along with all the other dogs. She was really dirty, so they had to shave her down, and she looks like she had puppies recently. Can you take her? Um, how recently did she have puppies I wonder, but that is ok, if she is a purebred we will take her in and find a new home for her, right?

I meet up to pick up the dog and yes, she looks like a purebred. She is very sweet, a nice dog. Wow, the shelter really whacked her coat back, and she is really underweight with her spine and ribs showing. That's ok, some good food and time and she will be a great dog for a loving family. Then I notice that she is producing milk and that her midsection is still really firm. I ask, *are you sure that she already had her puppies?* They tell me yes.

OK, they checked her out so they must be right. On the way home she sits behind me and nuzzles my ear. I talk to her and she responds with a little groan of joy. Wow, what a sweet girl - she is going to be a great family dog. I get home and decide to name her Taffy. She looks like a Taffy, light gold in color. She runs around and even responds to her new name.

I give her a bowl of food. Wow, she was really hungry. I give her a little more food, and she scarfs that down too. It's time to go to bed, so I make up a nice soft bed for her. No, she jumps up on my bed and decides this is her spot. I take her back to her bed, and she quietly accepts and goes to sleep. The next day she is ready for breakfast early. She is jumping and spinning around dancing and barking. Wow, she is really hungry. Another bowl of food that disappears with a look I can eat more you know.

Gee, has that light gone off in your head yet? I think I will take her to my veterinarian and have her checked out. I get to the clinic and the receptionist asks if this is a new dog, *yes it is, age, not sure, I think around four, sex, female, spayed, not sure*. What is going on with her? *Well she is really thin, the shelter told us she had puppies, but she still has milk and is really hungry*. I sit and wait my turn.

I get in and my veterinarian, who has known me for years, asks if she's another rescue. *Yes, she is. Nice girl, but thin and really hungry, she acts like she is still pregnant, but the shelter told us she already had puppies*. He checks her out and tells me they need to do an x-ray. OK, I trust his advice. The film comes back and we see six to seven puppies this young dog is carrying! *But the shelter told me that she already had her puppies!* The vet says, gee they were wrong. The next question is, *when is she due?* He gives me a little smile and asks if I have any plans in the next few days...*Yeah I was going on vacation*. He tells me that he hopes my vacation has time for some puppies because she is due anytime.

Duh. I have never dealt with a mother dog and a litter of newborns before. What do you do, when do you do it, how do you do it? Now this changes from a story to reality. I call then breed rep, Judy Byrd, and inform her she is going to be a great Aunt. I fill her in on the details we know. Judy is a great source of information. If she does not know something she finds out. With the internet at hand and calls to breeders, other SPDR people, and veterinarians we now have a ton of information to go through.

Taffy decides to speed up our crash course on puppies 101 and goes into labor five days after we get her. I call Judy at 10:00pm and tell her it's time. She drives like a rocket to my house because she wanted to be there for the birth. After a few hours we know that Taffy will not be able to deliver the litter naturally. A late call to my veterinarian and he tells me to bring her over and not to wait. At 2:00am he and his wife start an emergency Caesarian surgery. Judy and I are handed these little lives and told to rub them down vigorously, swing them down to clear their airways and get them howling. Wow talk about amazing.

They all started to howl and squirm right in our hands. No time to rest. This one goes into the incubator and we get handed another one. After six live puppies we thought we were done. Not quite, our vet yells out, "Hey we are not done in here." Three more puppies and we are, for a total of nine. All are alive and can fit in a large shoe box. It is the most amazing thing I have ever seen in my life. My vet finishes up with Taffy, sewing her incision up and getting her ready to go home to take care of her family.

Taffy turned out to be a great Mom. She nursed all of her puppies, rotating the little ones so they all got fed. Each one weighed in at approximately 13 oz. at birth. She cleaned up after each one. Every time one would even let out a squeak, she was right there to check them out. Every week the puppies gained a pound each. On the seventh and eighth week they gained 1.5 pounds each. Judy and I turned out to be the worrisome parents. Are the puppies OK, are they gaining weight OK, are they all healthy, is Taffy doing OK? Everything went perfect.

The puppies were weaned and have gone to their new homes. Judy did a tremendous amount of work taking in applications, doing home checks, working with other volunteers and assisting getting the puppies ready for adoption. She made up a puppy package with information on how to care for your new puppy, even including a blanket and some of Taffy's fur for the new owners to take home. Taffy has also been placed in new loving home. Judy and I will have the photos of our new family to adore for years. If anyone out there needs any advice on raising a litter of puppies, give us a call. Judy and I will be happy to share our experience.