

12 ORPHAN PUPPIES

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Our Vereda de Los Tres Naranjos was pregnant after a nice love story with Ollie – Olun de Sao José da Lapa. It was Vereda's second litter, being pregnant was not new to her and she was fully aware of her special condition. Fila bitches use to look for the company of their female owner while pregnant, like feeling the wish to share experiences, something like women among each other. She was growing and growing, obviously she had a traditional, big healthy fila litter on board. Her nipples were big, promising a generous quantity of milk to her babies.

The day of Vereda's delivery came closer, she lived inside the house, in my small fila office where the delivery box was ready, where I had placed a big garden chair for myself to sleep, where we had prepared everything one needs for receiving a litter. Normally big litters come to earth some days earlier than day n° 63. Vereda was two days early and that was not bad at all. Unfortunately Vereda did not throw out her pups in a steady rhythm like the year before, on the contrary, she had problems. We went into the garden many times, she tried to get rid of the first puppy, and I followed her with a torch and a towel because it would not be the first time we would have a birth in the garden or walking on the path in front of the house. But nothing came. At least I phoned my vet who asked me to come for an x-ray.



Vereda and her first litter, March 2007

Vereda was not very willing to leave the house but I insisted and she climbed into my car by herself and off we went. Did Vereda realize that it would be her last trip? I did not.

In the hospital the vet was astonished by seeing her enormous body, the pups were down in the abdomen, ready to come out and it was easy to see them moving inside. An X-ray showed what we feared; a puppy was in a backwards and double position, blocking the birth canal. The vet entered the vulva and could not reach the pup with his hand, Vereda was having contractions, and she was in labor indeed. Unfortunately there was only one option: a cesarian section.

Two vets prepared the operating-room and in the meantime I stayed with Vereda, caressing her. She was very calm. I stayed with her till the last moment of being conscious. She watched me, continually watched me with her beautiful brown eyes. I spoke to her: "Mama is here; I am with you my love". Was it a good bye for ever? She knew, because animals are so wise, but I – stupid human being - did not have any idea of the disaster to come.

I witnessed the operation and received the first puppy for reanimation (the pups of course were under influence of the anesthesia of the mother and needed reanimation and to be rubbed dry). Altogether 14 pups came out of my Vereda's enormous body, one was dead, and another one did not survive. So 12 pups managed to be alive. Vereda lost a lot of liquid and a lot of blood.

I left her in the hands of the vets who were closing the wound and had to rush home with the pups to put them under the red lamp and to give them some milk. I came home two thirty in the morning and should go back to the hospital in a few hours to help and assist Vereda for a complete recovery. Early in the morning a phone call from the vet made the world collapse; Vereda had died.

No need to say how I felt. That morning there was no time to think things over. I wanted her back; she was transported home in the ambulance. I stayed alone with her for some time, then I had to say farewell to my beloved Vereda and I buried her. She will be with us for ever, covered with wild flowers.

Later all kinds of questions came up.

The conclusion of the vets; she did not recover from an under-temperature.

The normal conclusion of every specialist who heard about the case was:

Why didn't she get a blood transfusion?

Colleagues, who had a cesarian section with a fila, were sent home to get a fila to do a transfusion from dog to dog and the bitch recovered at once.

Why was nothing done to save my Vereda? Why was she left in hands of a not experienced, brand new graduated vet in the Intensive care department ?

Why didn't anyone call me?

I am convinced, and many breeders with me, that her death could have been avoided, it has been unnecessary, may be we even can talk about a medical negligence. These things have to be talked over in the hospital when I feel calm and without strong emotions.



Mother and pups one year ago

Vereda was gone forever. Twelve of her children were waiting for me, hungry pups without the comfort of a generous mother body, without the enormous nipples full of good tasting milk, without the warm big tongue to lick their little bellies. Nothing, absolutely nothing of all this was there to give them a happy start in life, only a red lamp and a crying breeder.

How to bring up a motherless litter? That was a good question. I have given milk to many pups, to help the mother. Now I had to do it all alone, my husband was still traveling and would come back after four days. I had to be strong, mentally and physically.

The red lamp was shining on the place where the pups normally are piled up to drink from the mother's breast. The delivery box without my Vereda was too big for them. Here the orientation point of the mother's body was missing. New born puppies are blind and deaf. The only working sense-organ is the sense of scent. They smell the milk of the mother's nipples and that's why they are all there together. It was better to put them in a big box. I emptied one of those big plastic store-boxes and put the pups together. Later I put two boxes, one with the boys, another one with the girls because 12 together were climbing too much upon each other and I feared that the poor little fellow underneath would suffocate.



As always I had in stock a bucket of artificial mother milk, product of a very famous dog food brand. The first days I fed them 8 times a day.

There are three ways to feed puppies, first of all the traditional bottle, second a

catheter directly introduced into the stomach and third a hypodermic syringe. I do not like to give bottles because it takes too long when feeding 12 puppies. Many vets advise putting a catheter in the stomach but I do not like it, too impersonal and it seems that the lack of sucking movements also has

negative influence on the intestinal movements. The third option is the one I always use; I introduce the syringe with milk in the mouth of the puppy and press the milk in a slower or faster way that depends on the eager of sucking of each pup.

When the pup is satisfied I rub his belly with a piece of cotton wool, wet in hot water, with the aim to imitate the tongue of the mother that licks the belly of the puppies to stimulate them to urinate and to have their stool.

Without this massage the stool will stay in the intestines and the pup will suffer an obstruction that will lead to death.

One session of feeding puppies and rubbing bellies took about two hours of time. I did not sleep very much.



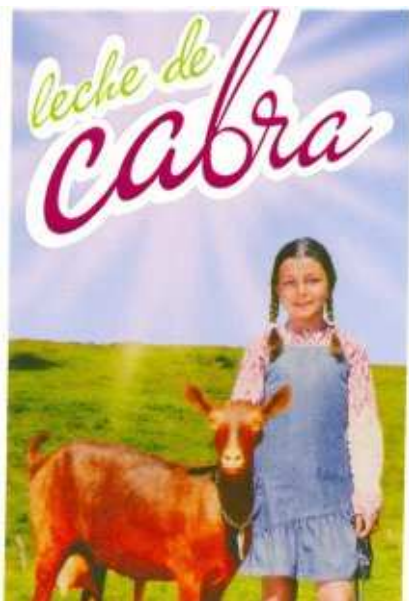
The days that my husband was still away I had some help from my friend and CAFIBE member Luisa Alfaro during the afternoon. She took care of the pups and I dedicated myself to the big dogs. Luisa even took me delicious prepared food to keep myself in condition.

After some days we discovered that stimulating the pups to have their stool took more and more time. Some pups even made me worry. I wondered if it would be wise to give them some olive oil to let them have better intestinal movement. I called a friend, a very experienced breeder and she told me that the artificial milk I used was feared among breeders because of causing obstruction. This was the terrible explanation of the problem my puppies showed that moment. She advised me to change product and to give these big fila puppies about 5 cm. of olive oil to get them have their stool. I

followed this advice immediately and gave my pups their syringe with the best quality of olive oil for human consumption. Many of them reacted positively, other ones still had problems. To be short, it took me about 4 days to get all of them having a normal stool, some puppies even needed an enema of body temperature water with some olive oil.

Of course I called the representative of the artificial milk to complain about the bad experience I had while feeding this milk to my pups. As expected the representative was very surprised, had never heard about this kind of problem. Also the breeder's delegate of the main office in Madrid called me to tell me that this experience was completely new, even for the vets in the laboratory and the factory. So I wonder how other breeders knew about the obstruction problem while giving this milk to pups, especially motherless pups, and the responsible people washed their hands in innocence. On the other hand the product never gave me problems in the past. The truth is this: at the beginning of 2006 the factory changed the formula, added an element called DHA and this is the source of the evil.

Breeder friends advised me some other artificial milk products, double as expensive as the one I used before. No problem, the pups must survive, but being close to the weekend I found out that the advised products were not in stock in the different veterinarian hospitals and could only be available after the weekend.



My friend Olegario mailed me: GOAT MILK, a friend – veterinarian had used it to bring up a litter some time ago in Brazil. This was it !!!!!!! How could I forget what was written in some old fashioned dog books I have in my library. Goat milk is the best product one can give to motherless pups. This has been done for ages by the old breeders who did not have those sophisticated products like we have now. Thousands of doggies are brought up this way.

At once I remembered my friend “Pepe the postman” who is living in my village and has a goat named Claudia Schiffer. Should I ask him to milk Claudia for me every day, but I suppose that she did not have

enough for a 12 puppy litter. Fortunately the supermarket sells goat milk, even more than I needed.

I consulted the book about dog nutrition of Dr. Billinghurst, the inventor of the BARF diet. I do not use this diet for my dogs but I love to consult the book when I want to be informed about the pros and contras of some food that might be suitable for my dogs.

About goat milk I found:

“Raw goat’s milk has proved itself as a milk substitute for young puppies. Why it has fewer problems in this respect than cow’s milk is not totally clear. However, goat’s milk is more easily digested, particularly by young animals. This is because it produces a more alkaline reaction in the stomach, and, compared to cow’s milk, forms a soft, friable, much more easily digested curd. It may also be because goat’s milk has a more favorable fatty acid balance. The fat is more digestible. The globules are finer and goat’s milk is naturally homogenized.

Obviously, goat’s milk as a substitute for bitch’s milk would be a better product with the addition of egg yolks, canola oil and B vitamins or brewer’s yeast.”

I decided to give my puppies the old fashioned goat milk, like the breeders did in the old times when commercial dog food factories were not as normal as they are nowadays.

I changed the canola oil (because of very bad comments about this product on the internet!) for one of the best products Spain can offer; olive oil.

It is wise to add a vitamin complex to cover all kind of vitamins a puppy needs. However at that very moment I was more concerned about feeding them without having obstructions and seeing them gain weight.

One time everything under control, we slowly started to add some baby porridge to the goat’s milk. We used “8 grains with honey” porridge of a well known brand, to make the milk a bit thicker. I also do this when feeding pups to help the mother when they are about ten days old.

Every four hours I fed the puppies, still using the syringe and still rubbing their bellies with wet cotton wool to stimulate them eliminate their stool. I calculated that in 24 hours I gave milk 72 times and rubbed bellies also 72 times. The pups were much bigger now, very strong and protesting because of this “belly rubbing act”. It’s funny that the boys gave me more problems

than the girls; the latter ones were calmer and even bigger. The pups were damaging me with their nails, even so that I had to tie a handkerchief around my wrists to protect them against scratches. Imagine how a mother dog must suffer because of those nails? Ever seen the breasts of a bitch after feeding her pups during a month or longer?

The pups were doing really fine now and at the age of about two weeks they started to open the eyes and they were able to do their stool without stimulation.

Until now we kept the puppies in two big plastic boxes, the girls together and the boys together. Blind puppies feel much cozier and more protected while having body contact. Now they were growing up and they looked like sardines in a can so it was time to let them loose in the big whelping box. I folded a blanket in 4 parts, covered it with a big beach towel and in the other part of the box we put newspapers as a toilet.

This change was a big step forwards for them and for us.

Rubbing bellies was over; intensive cleaning of the whelping box because of 12 puppies having stool many times a day began.

The type of food changed too. We added soaked puppy food to their goat milk and they started to eat from small personal dishes. My husband controls the weight and they are doing well. I think that we won the battle.





For your information: the first weeks we used 15 packs of cotton wool (pre-cut, very handy) three dozens of kitchen-roll. Now the pups are free in the whelping box, living on towels and as a consequence, we have a full washing machine every day.

We always collect old newspapers and use them in large quantities.

We use 5 liters of goat milk a day now. So when I go to the supermarket and see what I have in my shopping chart sometimes I laugh thinking that we buy all this for such a small little fila fellows.

Looking back now to what has happened in three weeks I must conclude that I lived life intensively, there was deep sorrow, desperation, fatigue, satisfaction and also motives to be happy.

Vereda will never be forgotten she will live in our hearts and will live on in her twelve little creatures.

I hope that what happened to us will never happen to our fila friends, it's a tremendous experience. I wanted to share my experience in bringing up the litter to give information just in case. I will not claim at all that the way I did is the ideal way. Other breeders may have different experiences.