

## **Stillbirths and Canine Herpes**

### **Elsa Sell**

Charlotte Lanning wrote to me as the newsletter was being prepared. She very recently had an unfortunate puppy loss experience that is worth sharing, in light of the recent breeder survey on declining puppy in litter registration numbers. If you're not acquainted with that information please see:

<http://www.beaconforhealth.org/Newsletter%20Spring%202007%20E-mail1.pdf>

In Charlotte's words: I remembered this survey as I just had my first experience with canine herpes in a pregnant bitch. She carried 10 puppies, six were stillborn, two died the first day and the other two are doing great so far; they are now 11 days old. Necropsy showed canine herpes. All I noticed was that all our dogs were sneezing for about a week when she was 4-5 weeks pregnant. As I read about it, it seems to be more of a consideration in Europe where many breeders vaccinate for it. I was just thinking that maybe that can be the cause of many breeding problems. It seems breeders in Europe who start to vaccinate say they have fewer misses, larger litters etc.

Charlotte also gave the following details: There is absolutely nothing I could have done about it. I hadn't even been showing or taken my dogs anywhere before they got this virus. I have absolutely no idea where they picked it up. When the first dog started sneezing (10 yr old neutered male) he sneezed so hard that he hit his head on the floor. I thought he probably had something stuck in his nose so took him to the vet. Days later more dogs started sneezing and pretty soon they all did it. It was over in a few days and we had no other signs of a virus, they ate and were happy.

About the puppies, one of them was born about 2 inches long, completely wrapped in a greyish, small placenta. I didn't even realize at first that it was a puppy. Two were almost full size (they were all small though, the biggest ones - which are the ones that made it - were 7 and 8 oz, most of them were about 5 ounces) but not completely developed, they had some of their organs on the outside, something I have heard of but never seen before. One of them had his eyes slightly open. The other three stillborns looked normal. But those three looked like they could have been alive before birth, they were pink, full grown etc. I had a vague feeling that something may not be right because the bitch expanded very quickly between the 6th and 7th week but then she didn't get that much bigger.

It was pretty obvious that one of the remaining puppies would not make it. He died the first day. The second puppy that died was one I thought would survive, he was small but did OK. He then suddenly didn't want to nurse and died very quickly. From what I understand, the two remaining puppies should be OK now. They are 11 days old and doing great, very strong and chubby. The vet who did the necropsy said that the bitch (and I'm assuming my other dogs who had the virus) will now be immune, but I have also read that immunity doesn't last for life so I'm not sure which is correct. I guess there is a vaccine in Europe that has been used for years.

Addendum (Elsa): I did a google search on Eurican®Herpes 205 (the vaccine) on the Merial UK and USA sites to find nothing. We'll have a followup article about canine herpes in the

spring newsletter. If anyone has a stillborn or a fading puppy death, please save the fetus (cold in plastic bag) and request a necropsy to rule out herpes infection, if you can manage financially to do so. Also, please examine the pup for physical abnormalities and record those for each puppy. Then contact me with your information.