

Ozzie the Dummy Foal by Isobel Lippiatt

How many of you have heard of the term "Dummy Foal"?

It is a term used to describe foals suffering from Hypoxic Ischemic Encephalopathy, (**Hypoxic Ischemic Encephalopathy – In laymen's terms is a condition in which the brain does not receive enough oxygen**). They are termed so because they act 'dumb' at birth, and do not follow the normal behavioural patterns of a new-born foal. It is a broad term which covers many different symptoms and conditions which make a foal act dumb. In many cases it is a temporary condition which can be alleviated through expert veterinary care, often via symptomatic support. Other names given to dummy foals you may have come across include wanderers, sleepers, or barkers (these names reflect some of the symptoms dummy foals may show).

<http://www.vevs.com.au/site/articles/56-uncategorised/254-dummy-foals.html>

On the 27th January 2014 we welcomed our stud's latest arrival – a beautiful three-quarter bred Shire x Quarter horse colt that was given the name "Ozzie" (In honour of the Australia Day Weekend Holiday's).

Although we had a foaling alarm on our mare "Ellie" we can only assume that she remained standing throughout the birthing process as we were not alerted of Ozzie's impending arrival. It may also account for the oxygen supply through the umbilical cord to Ozzie being cut off for a brief period of time as Ozzie was later to be deemed a "Dummy Foal"

So how did that diagnosis come about?

Ozzie did not make any attempt to stand in his first four hours of life, and not being able to stand and all attempts by us to get him to stand failed as he did not have the co-ordination to stay on his feet. Knowing it is imperative for foals to get that early colostrum from their dams we expressed his dam and bottle fed Ozzie for those first vital hours.

Once on his feet (this took 4 hours) Ozzie was not able to suckle successfully from his dam due to two reasons, the first was that his dam's udder was so distended that her teats were barely showing and the second was that when Ozzie did latch on there was so much milk that he was literally drowning each time he tried to feed, the milk would pool at the back of his throat and come out of his nostrils when he put his head down.

I decided to strip off some of "Ellie's" milk in an attempt to make it easier for Ozzie to feed by exposing her teats and hoping to take away the excess milk, this worked in that the teats were now more visible but it still made no difference to the amount of milk that was coming down and it was clear to see Ozzie was quite distressed when he did try to suckle as he would only remain on the teat for 30 seconds or less, and so the first of several calls was made to our Vet.

The first question our Vet asked was – have you checked to see if he has a cleft pallet? – Yes, as soon as we saw the milk coming out of his nostrils I put my hand as far into Ozzie's mouth as it could reach feeling for any deformities and could not find anything wrong. Happy with this answer our Vet suggested the same thing that we had – Ozzie was being put off by the volume of milk that his dam was letting down and although not ideal things should settle down in a few hours a day at most, and for us to just wait and watch him over the next 24 hrs.

Day 2 – Ozzie was up feeding off his dam, the milk would sometimes come out his nostrils but not at every feed, so we were sure the Vet was right and things would sort themselves out, we did notice that he was still only spending half a minute at most on the teat, but he was feeding every 20 minutes or so, obviously this was his way of coping with the deluge of milk. What worried me more was that he was not acting like a day old foal, he was going straight from the teat and sleeping, he was not staying on his feet, not trying to groom himself or play around his dam as foals do when all is going well, so I made a second call to our Vet voicing my concerns that "Something is just not right" – again our Vet reassured me that some foals are just a little slower than others and as long as Ozzie was thriving there was no need for concern.

Late afternoon on day two – I am beginning to think I am a neurotic mother hen, something is just not right, yes he is standing, yes he is feeding from his dam, but he is not staying awake for any length of time and he is certainly not bounding around as all our other foals have done in the past, so I ask my hubby to make the third call to our Vet – and next thing I know my husband and our Vet are discussing me as if I were not in the room – my hubby suggests that I am over reacting and that he thinks everything is fine, but to appease me he has made the call!!!!!!

Day three – Something is not right and I know it – Ozzie is in the water trough drinking like a fish, my son and I rush out to get him away from the trough and as we put him back into the stable he collapses into the hay, his heart rate is elevated and he is clearly exhausted, then we see yellow stained water pouring out of his backend, I know then that Ozzie has been unable to feed properly and being both hungry and dehydrated he has sought to fill up with water, I have a very sick little foal on my hands and treatment is urgently required to save his life.

I sent my son in to call the Vet, and my daughter Stephanie who works close to home, being disabled I am limited as to what I can do, I need help and I need it quickly.

My son comes out to tell me that he has contacted Stephanie and that she is on her way and that the Vet's clinic have said to bypass them and take Ozzie straight to the Veterinary Hospital as he will need their specialist care if he is going to pull through this, so I put in a call to the veterinary hospital to let them know what is happening and that we will be on our way soon.

Arriving at the Veterinary Hospital we were met with a team of Vet's and Vet Students who already had everything in place for assessing Ozzie's condition – a quick history was taken and the Vet specialist decided to double check the possibility of a "Cleft Pallet" as if this was to be found then the kindest thing would be to put Ozzie to sleep, thankfully no cleft pallet was found and so they set to treating the dehydration first – 5 litres of fluids with Glucose and Antibiotics were given in the first hour to help stabilize him, followed by an ultrasound of his internal organs, there was some pooling of liquid in the intestines but nothing more to be found. The specialist wanted to do an IgG on Ozzie to see if he was in need of a Plasma infusion, but first I had to agree to go ahead with the infusion if his results indicate one was needed, I was then informed that plasma costs are normally \$750 per litre and Ozzie would need 3 litres, however the hospital produces its own plasma so the cost would be \$250 per litre, I gave my consent and they

Drum Beat

Ozzie the Dummy Foal, Cont. by Isobel Lippiatt

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Twice daily calls to the vet kept us updated on his progress and his antics as he began to feel better, he had the vet students fearful of him as he would charge at them when they entered the stall and try to rear up, something that has been corrected since he returned home to us on Monday.

Ozzie is now back at home where he belongs and remains in isolation until the results come back from the culture that was taken of his diarrhoea, he has to finish the course of antibiotics, but we are hopeful that all is now well with him and he can simply put his energy into growing up.

So what did the Vet think had gone wrong?

Ozzie was a dummy foal and had a weak sucking reflex

1. His dam produced a very high volume of milk
2. Due to his weak sucking reflex he could not cope with the milk volume, resulting in it pooling at the back of his throat, and putting him off feeding from her.
3. Substituting the water in the trough for the milk as he could control the rate he drank
4. Dehydration and lack of energy brought around from not feeding
5. 2 very hot days after he was born

Although Ozzie was a “Dummy foal” he was mildly affected, there are all different levels depending on how long each foal has been without oxygen to the brain, most recover quickly without ill effects, others may need a lot of help and sadly a few are not so lucky. Without our help and my insistence that something was not right Ozzie may not have been with us now, so trust your instincts and act quickly if you think something is “Just not Right”.

WARNING EXTREME VIRUS WARNING: THE DRUM BUG By Aspen Bryan

Drum bug:

Highly infectious, contagious, and incurable. Can be caught even by just looking at the horse, infection increases by contact. BEWARE!

This is my story of living with the drum bug.

One rainy, overcast day I was brushing out my Clydesdale, not a very laborious task as she has a docked tail and very short mane. For some reason I couldn't shake this eerie feeling, the feeling that something was about to happen. As I was brushing through the little bit of

tail she had I heard a sound that shouldn't have been outstandish in anyway considering that I was in a large barn filled with horses. I heard the sound of hooves coming down the aisle. At the time I couldn't understand what was different about them, now I know, it was the slight swish of a long full tail being swept across the floor.

As the sound of the hooves approached I looked up only to be met with the sight of two beautiful horses. I said to myself I wish they didn't just come in miniature. I must of said it

much louder than I had intended because I heard back they do they are Drums! I was so focused on the beautiful horses that I hadn't even noticed the woman standing with them. I asked her what she meant, she said look up IDHA, you will see the Drums, I could get beauty and sweet brains all in one. And I did. The Bug bit. And just like that I was infected. Happy Happy Happy Drumming!