

**AMELIA & THE SHORTHAIRES**  
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A spring arrival at Parador Farms showed me a side of my German Shorthaired Pointers that surprised, and delighted, me.

We fortunate ones on the West Coast thought by the middle of March that spring had arrived. But a spell of warm weather suddenly turned into snow and well below freezing temperatures. One of my cows, a huge black beast called 'Lassie' (named after the Scotsman from whom I bought her) gave birth to baby 'Amelia' on the first morning of this cold snap. Lassie seemed as put off by mother nature as everyone else, and she promptly forsook her maternal duties for the shelter and hay filled manger of my little barn. All efforts to reunite bovine and baby were unsuccessful, and by the morning of the third day, little Amelia was in sorry shape. My cow vet (as opposed to my dog vet and my horse vet, both of whom I also work hard to generously support) announced in somber tones that drastic measures were in order if we were to pull Amelia through her pneumonia. These measures were to include a warm bath and a week or two inside my house, where she could be kept warm and bottle fed regularly. I nodded sadly but sagely, and since it was to have been a work day, I exchanged my suit for jeans, jacket and gumboots.

The three Shorthair pups, Tammy, Alix and Drew, watched us closely as we loaded the calf into a wheelbarrow and got her up to the house through the mud and driving snow. Ben, being older and somewhat a dog of the world, obviously had culinary designs on Amelia. He lost interest in the proceedings once it was apparent that we weren't going to deposit this rolling roast in the kitchen. The pups, on the other hand, happily led our little procession as we wheeled our way through the house into the gleaming white and brass bathroom. There, they sat like birds on a wire watching rather incredulously as Amelia was lowered into the deep white soaker tub. They yipped with excitement and licked at the walls, floor and cabinets which became drenched with cow pie and mud soup, as Amelia (with surprising vigor) showed her resentment at a warm water enema and eventually revived enough to try to escape. Little Alix, then five months old, was particularly solicitous and refused to leave as we blew the calf dry with a hairdryer and then deposited her into a dog pen in the laundry room, wrapped in several quilts and blankets.

Amelia survived and thrived under all this attention, and the young Shorthairs immediately accepted her as one of their own. Over the next week or so they sneaked into the pen whenever they could, forsaking couches and beds in favour of straw and shavings. They eagerly awaited each bottle feeding, catching the drips and cleaning the calf's face with enthusiastic licks. Only the promise of a play and a cookie could get them to leave Amelia's side.

This was all very cute, but I've been fooled by my dogs before, and I know them for what they are when it comes to cute little things – they are sneaks, opportunists and inveterate hunters of all manner of fur as well as feather. Over the years my Shorthairs have chased

everything from fawns to bear cubs. They've robbed the nests of birds and mice, swum madly after ducklings and goslings, terrorized squirrels and rabbits, and even fetched a dinner-plate sized turtle which strayed too far from the lake. I had to wonder what my adolescent mobsters would do when Amelia, then only a week or two old and still very vulnerable, was put outside alone with them.

I needn't have worried. The bond amongst the youngsters continued to this day and Amelia, now a big and strong three month old, still plays with the dogs, following them wherever they go and running enthusiastically to me at the first call of "puppy puppy". The pups are boisterous but gentle, and Amelia squeezes her eyes shut whenever they approach, anticipating the inevitable licking of her face and head. There's been no chasing of the calf except in play, but they still haven't learned that Amelia isn't interested in playing tug of war with an old sock or a stick! Drew and Alix are especially fond of Amelia, and they prefer to take their naps curled up outside with her in the sunshine or even in the drizzle.

Now, when I glance outside to see what the young Shorthairs are up to, I look for a small red calf in their midst, not only with them, but of them for the time being. It's a little renewal of faith and trust and I bless their innocence.

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