

Natural bobtails

Do you know about natural bobtails (NBT, T Locus)?

Many wonder “Could a naturally shortened tail really be dangerous?” Or “Don't all Aussies have short tails?” The Australian Shepherd does have a short tail, but this is typically because of docking done in the first few days of the puppy’s life. Natural Bobtails are entirely different, and messing with the T Locus gene can absolutely be dangerous.

A natural bobtail can vary from being simply one vertebrae short of a full tail, to basically a complete lack of tail. Very short NBT produce a higher occurrence of Spina Bifida, a birth defect where the spine and spinal cord do not form properly which can pinch the spinal cord. This can cause paralysis of the limbs, mental handicaps, incontinence, and extreme pain among other symptoms. In many severe cases the outlook is grim. Breeding two dogs carrying the NBT (T Locus) gene can lead to even worse outcomes.

	N	BT
N	N/N	N/BT
BT	N/BT	BT/BT

By crossing a dog carrying one copy of the NBT (BT) gene and one normal (N) gene to another carrier you produce: 25% without the trait, 50% carriers, and 25% homozygous NBT. Carrying two copies of the NBT gene is lethal in utero. In other words, 25% of your puppies will likely die before ever being whelped.

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