

Post-Natal Care for Puppies

Very little care is required of the owner for puppies during the first few weeks after birth. Instinct causes the mother to provide for most needs of her offspring. The best advice is to leave the new family alone as much as possible and simply watch for anything you feel might be abnormal. Don't hesitate to call us for advice.

- Ensure that the puppies are nursed within the first six (6) hours following birth. This provides antibodies that the puppies need to fight disease for the first 6-8 weeks of life. These antibodies are only absorbed during the first few hours after birth.
- Weigh the puppies daily. Puppies and kittens should gain weight daily at a rate of 2-7grams per day for each kilogram of anticipated adult weight and should double their birth weight by 10 days of age.
- Room temperature should be maintained at a minimum of 72 degrees F. Remember that it may be up to 10 degrees colder on the floor (since heat rises) than at eye level. Avoid drafts and keep the pups warm. Dampness and chilling can be **FATAL** to young puppies and kittens.
- A properly nourished puppy sleeps most of the time, stays quiet, and has a full stomach. Notify us if the puppies cry frequently. Extended crying may be a sign of problems, such as lack of milk or mastitis (infected milk). If the puppies must be hand-fed use a commercial puppy formula (i.e. Esbilac™). Human pediatric formulations are NOT satisfactory.
- Tail docking and dewlaw removal is not recommended.
- Eyes usually open at 10-14 days of age. Swollen eyes or discharges should be reported to us when observed.
- Weaning begins around 4-6 weeks of age. This is a good time to begin offering canned or moistened food. Puppies should be allowed to nurse until at least six weeks of age. Smaller breeds often do better if allowed to nurse for eight weeks, even though you begin the solid food feeding at four weeks of age.
- Socialization is extremely important. The primary period of socialization is from 3-13 weeks. Puppies should remain with their mother and siblings until 6-8 weeks to develop healthy social relationships with other puppies. Puppies also need to be socialized to people. The peak period for socialization with people is believed to be at about 6-8 weeks. This is why it is best to allow prospective owners to obtain their puppies at 7-8 weeks of age.
- Pups should be treated for internal parasites at 3-4 weeks of age.
- Start immunizations at 6-8 weeks of age.
- Puppies may be bathed whenever necessary, but **DRY THOROUGHLY!**
- Discuss flea control with us before using any product. Most flea control products are not safe for young puppies.