

GUIDELINES FOR REARING ORPHANED PUPPIES

There are several reasons why puppies may need to be reared by hand. These are likely to include either rejection from the mother, loss of the mother or that the mother is unable to feed due to infection or illness. A good deal of dedication is required but the results are very rewarding. Below are guidelines to assist you in raising healthy, happy puppies.

Environment:

Puppies are unable to control their body temperature effectively during their first week of life. It is essential to provide warm and draught free bedding with an ambient temperature of 30-32 degrees. Using an incubator, hot water bottles or heating pads as well as keeping the room temperature comfortable can achieve this. By the 2nd – 4th week the temperature can be dropped to 27-29 degrees, and by the 5th week 21-24 degrees.

Bedding:

A box or a pen may be used for housing the pups. It is a good idea to place rolled towels or newspaper around the edge of the box or pen to prevent the pups hurting themselves. Newspaper, old sheets and blankets may be used for bedding as long as they are removed and replaced when soiled.

Development:

Eyes: All pups are born blind. They usually open their eyes around 10-14 days of age. However until the pup is around three weeks of age vision plays very little part in his/her life.

Ears: All newborn pups are born deaf. Their ear canals are closed and they have flattened ears. At around 10 days the pup will start to react to sound and by six weeks their hearing has developed fully.

Smell: New born pups are sensitive to smell. This is their most important sense. Their mother would normally emit a smell that allows the pup to accurately seek out the nipple. By three to four weeks of age pups are attracted to scents such as milk or meat.

Teeth: All pups are born without teeth. By 3-4 weeks the pups temporary teeth start to emerge and by 6 weeks most 28 baby teeth are present.

Levels of Activity: Pups spend about 90% of their time sleeping. They then wake, cry and suckle. They are able to stand but are quite mobile, using their limbs to crawl. Pups may start to stand at 10 days but should be able to walk by 3 weeks. At this stage they begin exploring their surroundings and it is important to provide an area for them that is warm and hazard free.

Feeding:

Healthy pups spend most of their time sleeping and the rest feeding. A pup normally cries if he/she is hungry or cold. Pups lose weight in their first two days of life, but will start gaining by

the time they are 48 hours old. By 8-10 days they will have doubled their birth weight. There are a number of commercial formulas available on the market such as Divetelact.

However our clinic recommends the following formula:

1ml of double strength full cream powdered milk or neat Carnation Evaporated Milk per 30gm pup per feed x 5-6 feeds per day. This is equivalent to approximately 10% body weight per day.

Pups can be fed by bottle or with an eye-dropper. Make sure that your formula is warmed first. It is essential to stimulate the pup to defaecate and urinate after feeding. Stroking their anal and genital area with a tissue or cotton wool ball can do this. By 3 weeks of age they should be able to relieve themselves without stimulation. As soon as the pups open their eyes they can quickly learn to lap. Once they are drinking from a bowl puppy foods can be added to the milk. By 3-4 weeks of age puppy foods may be introduced separately. Pups should be slowly changed from being dependant on milk at three weeks to being fully weaned on prepared foods at 6-8 weeks. Commercial premium puppy foods are available at the clinic or at the supermarket. We recommend that you feed your pup 4 meals per day or more if required until at least 12 weeks of age where this may be dropped to 3 meals.

Worming & Vaccination:

We recommend that your pup be wormed every two weeks until he/she is 12 weeks of age. This may be done using commercial puppy syrups.

We vaccinate pups to protect them from diseases that may otherwise cause serious illness or death. Our clinic uses the Protech range of vaccine and our recommendations are that your pup should have his/her 1st vaccination at 6 weeks then at 9 weeks and then at 12 weeks. He/she would then require an annual booster thereafter.

Socialization:

Day 14-49 is a crucial period in canine socialization. It is during this period that puppies learn that they are dogs. They learn to bite and bark and play. They learn to be submissive to their mother. Orphaned puppies tend to be nervous, bark, bite and be less responsive to discipline if they are not socialized properly during this period. It is critical that your puppies are introduced to as many things as possible in a friendly and happy manor eg, vacuum cleaner, other dogs, vet, city traffic, men with beards, people in hats, children. Any damage done at this time is much harder to undo later.

ENJOY YOUR PUPPY