



CANINE FOSTER CARE GUIDE

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Preparing for your Puppies:

Make sure that you have a suitable place for them to stay. A bathroom often works well. The room should adhere to the following guidelines:

- A space where temperature can be controlled.
- The space has been disinfected by using a mild bleach solution (1 part bleach to 32 parts water).
- Separate from other household pets.
- Can withstand messes: spilt water or food, vomit, urine, feces, etc.
- No breakable items.
- Electrical outlets and wires are blocked.
- No small items.
- Secured windows (closed or with a secure screen).
- Secured appliances (toilet lids closed)

Puppy Development

In the first two weeks of life, puppies are helpless and vulnerable. They are still developing basic reflexes, their hearing and vision is still not fully developed, and they are unable to properly control their body temperatures. They should therefore be confined to a nursery area. Puppies should not be allowed to mingle with your own pets. During the first 1-3 weeks of life puppies do not urinate or defecate on their own and require stimulation for elimination. Gently rub a warm cloth or cotton pad on the puppy's genital area and anus. This should be done before or after feeding. Keeping the puppies clean from food and feces is vital for his or her health. If you notice your puppy has food, urine, or feces on him or her gently wipe the puppy down with a warm damp cloth or baby wipe. Be sure to dry the puppy well afterwards so they do not become chilled.

Puppy expectations and Care by age:

| | | |
|------------|---|---|
| 0-1 | Bottle feed 1/2 tablespoon of formula every 2-3 hours, overnight feeding can be every 3-4 hours. If there is a Mom dog, make sure that all puppies are nursing. Puppies can nurse from Mom for up to 45 minutes at a time. A lot of crying or activity could indicate a problem with Mom's milk supply. | At one week of age, the puppies should be handled minimally. Puppies will sleep about 90% of the time and eat the other 10%. Puppies should be kept in a warm environment as chilling is the number one danger to newborn puppies. |
| 1-2 | Bottle feed every 2-3 hours until puppies' bellies are full but not bloated. Overnight feeding can be every 3-4 hours. | Healthy puppies should be round and warm. When you pick up a puppy they should wiggle energetically and healthy puppies seldomly cry. The puppy's ear canal should open between 5 and 8 days. Eyes will open between 8 and 14 days. |
| 2-3 | Bottle feed formula every 3-4 hours, until their bellies are full but not bloated. | Puppies begin to crawl around and should be almost standing. They will begin to play with each other, biting ears, tails and paws before their teeth come in. They should be teething at this period. |
| 3-4 | Bottle feed formula every 4 hours until the puppies are full but not bloated. Puppies may start to lap from a bowl. | Puppies begin to see well and their eyes begin to look and function like adult dog eyes. Puppies will start cleaning themselves. If they have a mother, she will continue to do most of the serious cleaning. At three weeks, puppies are in their canine socialization period. If they have siblings allow them to play at will. |
| 4-5 | Bottle feed as needed to keep puppies from crying with hunger. Puppies usually can drink and eat from a saucer by 4 weeks. Weaning should be done gradually. (See Weaning description in Puppy Care section.) | Begin housebreaking at four weeks of age. This can be done by using training pad or taking the puppy to an outside secure fenced in area of your home. After each feeding, place the puppy on the pad/outside for him or her to go the bathroom. Be patient! He or she may not remember to do this every time. |
| 5-6 | Feed gruel 4 times a day. Thicken the gruel gradually by reducing the amount of water mixed with it. Introduce dry food and water. If you are fostering a litter with their mother, continue weaning. For reluctant eaters, try mixing puppy formula into the gruel. | At about 5 weeks, puppies can start to roam around the room, under supervision. The strongest, most curious puppy will figure out how to get out of the nest and the others will quickly follow. Be sure to allow the puppies to have different types of toys around so they may explore and become familiar with a variety of surfaces and textures. |
| 6-7 | By this age, puppies should be eating dry food well. Feed the puppies at least three meals a day. Puppies may not eat much at a single sitting, they usually like to eat a frequent intervals throughout the day. | By this time, you will have "mini-dogs". They are able to wash themselves and play games with each other and you. Some puppies may be food possessive, you may need to use a second dish and leave plenty of food out. Do not use adverse or punishing correction techniques. Be sure to take the puppies to their pads or outside after feeding, during play sessions, and after naps. These are the usual time that puppies need to eliminate. |
| 7-8 | Offer dry food 3-4 times a day. Leave a bowl of water down for them to drink at will. Do not feed the puppies table scraps. | Continue playing and socializing with the puppies. You can even begin training such as sit, down, roll over and come when called |
| 8+ | Offer dry food 3 times a day. Leave down a bowl of water for them to drink at will. | By this time, the puppies should be ready for spay/neuter surgery and adoption. |

Feeding/Care

Type of Food

Never give a neonate puppy anything other than their specified formula! (No cow's milk!) Puppies who are less than three to four weeks old are fed a combination of liquid or powder formula. After a feeding, unused liquid formula can be stored for up to three days in the refrigerator or frozen for future feedings. Frozen formula will last for 6 months.

Milk Prep

The powder formula must be mixed for feedings. It is important to closely follow mixing directions: one part powder into two parts warm water (as it can cause diarrhea or constipation if not done correctly). Any reconstituted powder formula can be refrigerated for up to 24 hours. After that point, it must be discarded.

Gruel Prep

Mix 1/2 can of wet food with 1/4 can of formula per puppy. You can add a little water if the puppies seem to like a looser consistency. It's OK make gruel in bulk and refrigerate it, but you'll need to warm it before offering it to the puppies.

Amount of Food

Overfeeding is as dangerous as underfeeding. Feed puppies until they are full but not bloated.

How to Bottle Feed Puppies

- Only use clean nipples and bottles!
- Feed puppies one at a time. Place them on a countertop and allow them to feed with four paws on the counter and with a level head. This simulates how they would nurse from a mom.
- Do not feed a puppy while she is on her back. This can cause formula to go down the wrong way and end up in the lungs.
- Gently open the puppy's mouth with your finger and place the nipple on the tongue.
- Stroking puppy can help them to eat.
- Pull lightly on the bottle. This promotes strong sucking.
- Tilt the bottle up slightly. This prevents the puppy from inhaling too much air.
- Do not squeeze the bottle to force formula into the puppy's mouth. This can cause formula to move into the lungs.
- After feeding, burp your puppy by gently massaging her back.
- Be sure to stimulate the puppy after or before feeding. Stimulate them with a warm cloth if necessary

Weaning

Weaning can occur at 4 to 5 weeks and should be conducted gradually. Create a gruel by mixing moistened dry food with water or canned food. Introduce them to solid food by offering warmed can food, mixed with a small amount of water into gruel, in a shallow dish. Begin by placing puppy to the side of the plate, he or she should start to eat, it may take a few tries for puppies to understand. If they are not interested, wait a few hours and then try again. After they have accepted the gruel, gradually thicken it by adding less water. Begin to also offer dry food on a free feeding basis. If the mother is present she will usually begin weaning the puppies by

discouraging them from nursing; however, some dogs will allow the nursing until the puppies are old enough for spay/neuter surgery. Some nursing activity is the canine equivalent of thumb-sucking, that is, for comfort only. Even if the puppies appear to be nursing, they may not be getting all of the nutrition they need from mom. Make sure the puppies are eating food and gaining weight.

Preparing For Mom and Pups

In some cases, moms are fostered together with her litter. There are a few things to keep in mind for this type of foster situation. Moms require a calm setting that has privacy and minimal activity. Stress can cause moms to stop taking care of their puppies.

Bringing Mom Home

You will need a separate space for a mom with her litter. When you first bring them home, leave them alone in their new space. The separate area may be referred to as a whelping box or nesting area. Mom will need some time, up to a few days, to adjust to her new space. Be sure to offer mom fresh food, water and a clean nesting area.

Problem Behaviors in Momma Dog

Maternal neglect – In some cases, about 8% of the time, puppies die from poor maternal care. There are a few causes of this. Some dogs lack maternal instincts and, in other cases, it is nature's way of handling sick or weak puppies. Environmental stress is an important factor, which is why it is important to create a calm environment for mom and the litter. Foster parents should watch for signs of maternal neglect. Call the Foster Coordinator if you notice the mom avoids feeding and grooming her puppies and ignores their cries.

Maternal Aggression – As mom protects her puppies, it is common for her to be aggressive towards humans or other animals. Do not try to introduce your household pets to your foster mom as this adds too much stress to the environment. If aggression becomes severe, call the Foster Coordinator.

Moms Care of Pups

For the first few weeks, mom will do everything necessary to take care of her puppies. Puppies start nursing very soon after birth. Mom will also groom her puppies. It's best to leave the mom alone for the first two weeks except to feed and to go outside for potty breaks.

Socializing and Instilling Good Behaviors

Even adult dogs need socialization; however, proceed slowly with any adult dog that you do not know. Create situations for socialization but let her come to you. Stop the session if you notice any negative signs, such as swishing tail, ears laid back, head jerk towards you, tensing up, moving away, or growling. It is always best to move slowly and use caution when reaching into the nesting area.

From 3 weeks to 3 months, puppies are biologically primed to learn that new sights, sounds, smells, objects, environments, and people are fun and safe. This is the most crucial and sensitive period in a puppy's life.

Socialization is not simply exposing a puppy to a variety of people, places, and things, but using positive proactive socialization training. Each new person the puppy meets should be a wonderful experience with treats and toys. Take things slow if your puppy seems fearful of the new person, place, or thing.

Housebreaking

We always want to set our puppies up for success, and doing so in the house training process is essential! Puppies should have frequent breaks and be taken outside to the same spot to relieve themselves every 30 – 60 minutes when active (when waking up from a nap, after drinking or eating, and after a play session). A puppy can hold his/her bladder one hour for each month of age (i.e.: 2 months = 2 hours, 3 months = 3 hours).

Remember these five steps to successful house training:

1. Prevent accidents
2. Reward going to the bathroom
3. Anticipate bathroom needs
4. Interrupt accidents and avoid punishing
5. Clean up accidents with enzyme cleaner

Pee Pads: For Puppies Five Weeks and under: place puppies on pee pads immediately after waking up, after eating, and about once an hour. Praise the puppy enthusiastically every time he/she urinates or defecates on the pad. Change the pads frequently, as puppies tend to chew on pee pads.

Crate Training

House training and crate training go hand in hand. A crate can be a great tool to use for your puppy, but it can also be misused. The crate should be big enough for your puppy to stand up, turn around, and stretch out; we will make sure you go home with the correct size, but your puppy may grow. Please let us know if you need a larger crate.

Your foster puppy/dog should have a short term confinement area, such as the crate, and a long term confinement area, such as an x-pen or baby gated section of the house or room.

If you are beginning to crate train, feed your puppy in the crate, provide stuffed chew toys only in the crate, and/or play crate games to build a positive association with the crate. Keep sessions short and fun, and have your puppy in the crate for short periods of time when you are home.

Never use a crate as a form of punishment for your foster puppy or dog.

Medical and emergency protocols

Clinic Appointments/Foster Rechecks

When you pick up your foster puppies, you will receive a Foster Agreement with the date of their foster recheck appointment. Vaccines and dewormers are given starting at four weeks old and every two weeks afterward until they are adopted. It is pertinent to

make your scheduled appointments. To schedule/reschedule appointments, call or email the foster coordinator. **Please schedule an appointment with the Foster Coordinator before coming in for a clinic appointment. You may not be seen by clinic staff if you fail to schedule an appointment.**

If you are fostering a group of puppies on medications, please ensure that your kittens get all prescribed doses. Do not end medication early for any reason. If any of your foster puppies have not responded to medications after five days (or in the time instructed by a veterinarian), please contact the foster coordinator.

Veterinary care

Because we are ultimately responsible for your foster animals' well-being, our staff must authorize any and all treatment for foster animals at our approved veterinary partners. If your foster puppies/dog need to go to the veterinarian, **please notify the foster coordinator** by phone. The foster coordinator has to give authorization for the animal to be taken for offsite treatment. Remember, **foster parents will be responsible for payment of any medical care if they take their foster animal to a veterinarian without authorization from the foster coordinator or foster and rescue manager.**

For **non-emergency** situations, please understand that our clinic books quickly and may not be available for same-day appointments. **We ask that you schedule basic non-emergency appointments at least 24 hours in advance. To schedule an appointment with the onsite veterinarian, please contact the Foster Coordinator at foster@dorchesterpaws.org.**

Signs of Illness and What to do Next

Diarrhea

There are three types of stool: normal, soft and diarrhea. Normal stool is firm and has a definite shape. Soft stool is not firm but still has some shape. Diarrhea is liquid, with or without color to it. Diarrhea is common and can be caused by parasites, viruses, bacteria, food changes, stress, overfeeding and other issues.

Diarrhea must be monitored as it can lead to dehydration. If the foster is active, mild diarrhea that occurs for 24 hours is not a concern. Feed the foster less at a time but more often. If the diarrhea is severe, lasts more than 3-4 feedings or contains blood/parasites, call the Foster Coordinator to schedule a recheck..

Parasites

Fosters are dewormed upon intake and at every recheck. Parasites are commonly found in the stool of puppies and kittens. Tapeworms may look like grains of rice.

Roundworms look like spaghetti and can be seen in the litter box or in vomit. If you notice worms, call the Foster Coordinator to schedule a recheck.

Vomiting

Vomiting is not serious unless it happens continuously or accompanied with diarrhea. It can lead to dehydration. If vomiting occurs 2-3 times in a row, call the Foster Coordinator right away.

Eye Discharge

It is normal for animals to have little pieces of crust in their eyes after waking up. If you see continuous yellow or green discharge, swollen or closed eyes call the Foster Coordinator to schedule a recheck. You can use a warm, damp towel to wipe the affected eye(s).

Ear Mites

Ear mites are parasites that live in the ear canal. You may notice a bald spot behind their ears due to continuous scratching. They may also violently shake their head. The ears may smell bad and you may see brown discharge that resembles coffee grounds. Ear mites are contagious to other animals and need to be treated. Call the Foster Coordinator if you notice any these symptoms.

Fleas

Animals that have fleas will scratch themselves often. Topical and oral flea prevention are given to fosters over 4 weeks of age. Flea prevention for puppies under 4 weeks includes daily brushings with the flea comb and daily bedding changes. If you still notice signs of fleas, you can wash the puppy in a small amount of Dawn® dish soap followed by using a flea comb to remove any remaining fleas. Be sure to thoroughly dry him/her following a bath. Baths should not be given more than once every 1-2 weeks. If you still notice signs of fleas, call Foster Coordinator to schedule a recheck.

Ringworm

Ringworm is a contagious fungus that that can spread to other animals and humans. A sign of ringworm is thinning hair or patches of hair loss. Ringworm is difficult to remove from your house. To help with prevention and spreading maintain cleaning protocols and a good hand washing routine. Call the Foster Coordinator if you notice any hair loss.

Mange

Mange is caused by parasites that infect the skin of animals. Some forms of mange are contagious to other animals and humans. The symptoms include itching, hair loss and sores. If you notice these symptoms, call the Foster Coordinator for treatment.

Upper Respiratory Tract Infection (URI)

URIs are common and are caused by contagious viruses and bacteria. Signs to look for:

- Sneezing and discharge from eyes/nose

- Congested breathing
- Loss of appetite
- Lethargy (lack of energy)
- Dehydration

If you notice any of these signs, please contact the Foster Coordinator to schedule a recheck.

Serious Puppy Ailments

Parvovirus

Parvovirus is a deadly and contagious virus that attacks a dog's gastrointestinal tract. Once parvovirus is present in an environment it is difficult to remove. It is transmitted through direct contact with contaminated feces.

Signs to look for:

- Lethargy
- Dehydration
- Loss of appetite
- Abdominal pain and bloating
- Fever
- Low body temperature
- Vomiting
- Severe diarrhea with or without blood

If you notice any of these signs, immediately contact the Foster Coordinator to schedule a recheck.

Distemper

Distemper is a highly contagious and fatal disease that attacks the respiratory, gastrointestinal and nervous systems. It is transmitted through direct contact with contaminated saliva, blood, or urine.

Signs to look for:

- Severe Upper Respiratory Infection or Pneumonia
- Lethargy
- Neurological signs such as seizure activity, convulsions, and partial or complete paralysis.

Fading Puppies

Occasionally, a puppy that appeared healthy will suddenly stop thriving. They will stop growing, socializing and crawling. They will begin to lose weight and may cry continuously. When this happens, they fade quickly and, even with medical intervention, may not survive 48 hours.

There is not understood cause for this condition. Occasionally, puppies die in foster care. If this should occur contact the Foster Coordinators for information concerning the disposition of remains.

If a puppy is displaying any combination of the symptoms listed above, please contact the foster coordinator immediately and start the emergency phone protocol. These ailments can be fatal if left untreated.

Criteria for emergencies

What constitutes a medical emergency in a puppy? A good rule of thumb is any situation in which you would call 911 for a person. Here are some specific symptoms that could indicate an emergency:

- Not breathing or labored breathing
- Symptoms of fading puppy syndrome or distemper
- Signs of extreme dehydration: dry gums, weakness, vomiting, not urinating, skin tenting
- Abnormal lethargy or unable to stand
- Unconsciousness or unable to wake up
- Cold to the touch
- Broken bones
- Any trauma: hit by a car, dropped, stepped on, etc.
- A large wound or profuse bleeding that doesn't stop when pressure is applied
- Loss of appetite for more than 12 hours

If a foster puppy displays any of these symptoms, please follow the emergency phone protocol. If the animal is vomiting or has diarrhea, but is still active, eating and drinking, you can probably wait until the next day to get help. However, if the animal is lethargic and shows no interest in food or water, start the emergency phone protocol.

If you think your foster pet may incur permanent damage or pass away if not seen by a veterinarian immediately, please proceed to the approved emergency clinic and start the emergency phone chain on the way.

*For quick references, FAQs, or other foster resources please visit our website at www.dorchesterpaws.org

