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Information Sheet

Canine: Guide to Raising Orphan Puppies

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Welcome to the team of dedicated puppy Rescue Volunteers! Puppies under the age of 8 weeks need a mother- either a dog or a human surrogate. They are very vulnerable in a shelter and the chance to get them into a foster home within 24 hours is a chance to save their lives. The following guidelines will help you with the care of your puppies and will help you understand the policies and procedures of the foster care program. Please keep the following items on this list in mind before you agree to bring foster animals into your home.

- A foster animal could potentially carry illness into your home that could affect your resident animals' (or humans') health.
- To protect people, young children should not handle the foster puppies and everyone should wash their hands after handling animals and their fecal waste.
- To protect other dogs, foster animals should be separated from household pets for at least two weeks. This means that you should also prohibit the sharing of food and water bowls and toys.
- Puppies should be de-fleaed before they enter your home and as often as necessary to keep fleas off of them, because fleas can spread disease among your other animals and to people.
- You should **wash your hands** with soap and water before handling your own animals or children and you may also want to change clothes.
- You should routinely disinfect the foster puppies quarters and disinfect the entire premises before new puppies are introduced.
- The best way to disinfect the area is to remove all organic material and fecal debris and then soak with a mild bleach solution (1 part bleach to 32 parts water) for at least 30 minutes. All surfaces, bowls, toys etc need to be disinfected (so you probably want to keep puppies in a room without carpeting, hardwood floors and so forth).
- It is best to have only litter at a time (rear the puppies in cohort groups) rather than constantly adding new puppies in with others. Keeping them in cohorts allows you to prevent disease mixing among cohorts and to disinfect between groups.
- It is possible even with these precautions that resident dogs could be exposed to mild infections such as URI. Ask the foster coordinator for more information if this is a concern.

Supplies you will need before you bring home puppies

- **Box or carrier** You may want to use the carrier in which you took the litter home. It will provide a familiar-smelling, dark, quiet home for your foster puppies. However, a bigger box may be desirable, as it will allow you to see in, as well as provide plenty of room for the mother and the new, growing

litter of puppies.

- **Newspapers** Keep several layers in the bottom of the box, and they will come in handy when the puppies start to roam around the room.
- **Water bowls** Heavy and impossible to tip. Should be stainless steel or porcelain/ceramic, NOT plastic, as plastic is difficult to disinfect because it is so porous.
- **Food bowls (at least 2)** One is for the eat-at-will dry food, the other for canned food. You can use TV dinner trays, paper plates or whatever you have; any relatively flat plate or saucer will do. The larger the litter, the larger the plate should be so that no one gets crowded out.
- **Food** You should have both dry puppy chow, canned dog food (any brand for adults or puppies), and all-meat baby food (must not contain vegetables or onion powder). Offer several choices to weaned puppies to determine their preferences.
- **Heating pad, hot water bottle, or infrared lamp** Unless the nursery is at least 85° and your puppies are 2 weeks or older, you need to supply extra heat. **BE SURE THAT THE PUPPIES HAVE ROOM TO MOVE AWAY FROM THE HEAT** (leave room for mom if she is with them). For instance, if you are using a heating pad, place it under a towel so that it covers only half of the floor area of their box. The heating pad should be on "low" or "medium." If you use a hot water bottle, keep it where dog can't destroy it.
- **Clean towels and blankets**
- **Toys** Plastic, disinfectable toys are good to reuse for new litters. Clean tennis balls and old stuffed socks, caps work well.
- **Scale** Although not critical to success, a food or postal scale will be very helpful in monitoring small puppies growth, which can be variable among breeds.

Caring for a Pregnant Bitch

If you are fostering a pregnant dog during her final week of pregnancy, it is important to remember she may not have a big appetite because the puppies are crowding her internal organs. Feed her several small meals daily, rather than one or two larger meals. Leave water out at all times and remember that food requirements increase for pregnant dogs.

Prepare an area for the mother to have her puppies. Make it a dry, warm, relatively dark and out-of-the-way place, and put Mom in it. If she doesn't want to stay in it, don't insist, but you can encourage her by petting her and giving her little food treats. If your nursery room is not that warm, you can make it warmer by wrapping a heating pad in a towel, setting it on "low," and placing it under HALF of the nursery area so that the mother and puppies can remove themselves from the heat source if they choose. One word of warning: you might consider wrapping duct tape or a cord protector around the cord, as some puppies tend to chew them!

The birth of puppies, or kindling

The majority of dogs give birth with no problem or need for outside help. Before delivery, the bitch may become irritable and restless. She will search for a place to have her puppies. Lead her to the designated nursing area. If she has her puppies outside of the pre-assigned area, let her. When she is completely done with the delivery, move them all into designated area.

Many dogs want you to stay with them, and will try to follow you if you leave. You will probably have to spend some time with this kind of dog soothing her. Often after the birth of the first couple of puppies, she will be very busy and not so dependent on your presence. Other bitches will try to get away from you and hide. Give her the space she needs, but keep checking in on her regularly. It is quite possible that you will miss the birth process entirely. You might wake up one morning or come home from work to find the new family born, dry, and nursing.

Stages of canine labor

The first stage may take 12 hours, during which the bitch may begin to act restlessly. She may become very active, and appear to be uncomfortable, sometimes whining loudly.

In the second stage, the water breaks, and straw colored fluid is passed. A puppy will be delivered a few minutes later. The bitch will lick the puppy clean and bite through the umbilical cord. She is bonding with her puppies through this process, and learning to recognize them as her own. Do not disturb her. It may look as if her treatment is too rough, but she is actually stimulating breathing and blood circulation. Puppies should begin nursing between subsequent births.

In the final stage, the placenta follows a few minutes after delivery of a puppy. The mother will probably eat some or all of the placentas. Puppies are born anywhere from minutes to hours apart, so most deliveries can take a significant amount of time. Litter sizes can be variable depending on the breed. Larger litters of 10 or

more are possible.

If a puppy is not born within 2 hours and the mother appears to be continually straining or in distress, call a veterinarian immediately. She may need a Caesarean or a drug called oxytocin to stimulate contractions. If the mother is content and happy, she is probably finished, though there have been cases in which a dog resumed delivery sometime later.

General Care of Puppies

1. No fostered animals should be allowed outside for the first few weeks. When outside, the puppies should be kept in a secured area and under direct supervision.

2. Young puppies should be kept in a large box or kennel lined with a towel for easy cleaning. It is very important to keep the puppies warm, and a heating pad is ideal for this. The heating pad should be placed under HALF of the towel (so they can move away from the heat if they need to) and set on "low." The more puppies in your litter, the better able they will be to keep warm by sleeping together in a heap. Small litters and singletons need more help keeping warm. Keep puppies away from heaters or cold drafts.

3. If puppies are not urinating and defecating on their own (when they are less than 2 weeks old), they will need to be stimulated. This should be done every few hours (often right after feeding) by gently rubbing a warm wet paper towel on the puppies anus and genital area. They will pee and poop into the paper towel.

4. Keeping puppies clean

A mother works hard to keep her puppies clean, grooming them thoroughly to remove any sticky messes they may get into, such as food or feces. Keeping puppies clean in the absence of their mother can be a messy business, but it is extremely important.

A flea comb will get rid of dried feces in the fur. You can also stroke a puppy with a warm, damp cloth, using short strokes to mimic a mother's tongue. Be sure to dry him well so he can't chill.

5. Socializing

Any introductions of dogs to other dogs or cats to dogs should be made with great care and under constant supervision.

Part of your job is to convince the puppies that humans are kind and loving. Outgoing, friendly puppies can be cuddled and played with freely, after spending a day or so to accustom themselves to a comfy box in a quiet room. Shy puppies will need more encouragement. Try sitting on the floor with a puppy held against your chest, supported underneath, and facing outwards, so he can't see how big and scary you are. Stroke him and speak gently, telling him how cute and brave and fabulous he is (puppies love to hear that!).

6. General concepts of feeding

Commercially available puppy formula should be given at the puppy's body temperature, about 100 degrees. Once the can is opened or the powder reconstituted, unused formula should be kept refrigerated and discarded after 24 hours.

It is best to feed the puppies one-by-one, and on a counter-top - this allows them to feed with all four feet on the counter, and their heads level, much as they would if they were nursing from their mom. Some puppies prefer to nurse standing on their hind legs while holding the bottle. They will require a little support from you in this position. Gently open a puppy's mouth with one finger and place the tip of the nipple on his tongue. If he won't eat, try stroking him. Pull lightly on the bottle to encourage vigorous sucking. Be sure to tilt the bottle up slightly to prevent the puppy from inhaling too much air. Do not force the puppy to nurse, or allow him to nurse too fast. Avoid feeding a puppy while he is cradled on his back - if the fluid goes down the wrong way, it may end up in his lungs.

After each feeding, the puppy should be burped. Hold him against your shoulder and gently massage his back or pat it lightly.

Overfeeding is as dangerous as underfeeding puppies! Keep an eye on your puppies at feeding time and monitor how much each is eating. If you see signs of diarrhea, separate them until you find out which one is sick. Your puppies will generally regulate their own food intake. If they need more food, they may whine or suck on their litter mates. A good indication that they are getting enough to eat is the size of their bellies - they should be filled out after a meal, but not bloated.

Maintaining Healthy Growth

Expectations and Care at Each Age

0-1 Weeks

- **Feeding:** Bottle feed 1/2 tablespoon formula every 2 - 3 hours. If the bitch is with the puppies, they should nurse vigorously and compete for nipples. Newborns can nurse up to 45 minutes at a time. Be sure to watch puppies nursing at least once a day, if the bitch will permit it. Check that everyone is nursing and that there isn't too much jockeying for position. A great deal of activity and crying could indicate a problem with milk flow, quality or availability. When the bitch reenters the box, there should be some fussing for only a few minutes before everyone has settled down to serious nursing.
- **Environment:** The temperature of the nest box should be nice and warm: 85-90 degrees. Chilling is the number one danger to newborn puppies.
- **Behavior and training:** At one week of age, the puppies should be handled minimally. Puppies will sleep 90% of the time and eat the other 10%.

1-2 weeks

- **Feeding:** Bottle feed formula every 2 - 3 hours, until puppies are full but not bloated.
- **Environment:** Floor temperature of the nest box should be 80 to 85 degrees.
- **Behavior and training:** Ear canals open between 5 and 8 days. Eyes will open between 8 and 14 days. They open gradually, usually starting to open from the nose outward. All puppies are born with blue eyes, and initially no pupils can be distinguished from the irises - the eyes will appear solid dark blue.
- Healthy puppies will be round and warm, with pink skin. If you pinch them gently, their skin should spring back. When you pick a puppy up, it should wiggle energetically and when you put it down near the mom it should crawl back to her. Healthy puppies seldom cry.

2-3 weeks

- **Feeding:** Bottle feed formula every 3-4 hours, until puppies are full but not bloated.
- **Environment:** The floor temperature of the nest box should be 75 to 80 degrees.
- **Behavior and training:** If there is a bitch, she will begin to spend larger periods of time out of the nest, though she will not go far from it.
- Puppies begin to crawl around day 18 and can stand by day 21. They will begin to play with each other, biting ears, tails and paws even before their teeth have come in. Their milk teeth are cut during this period. They learn to sit and touch objects with their paws.
- Puppies begin their socialization phase - they will be strongly influenced by the behavior of their mother for the next six weeks. To further socialize puppies, increase the amount of handling, and get them accustomed to human contact. It is important not to expose them to anything frightening; children may seem intimidating and should be supervised closely while visiting to ensure gentle handling.

3-4 weeks

- **Feeding:** Bottle feed formula every 4 hours, until puppies are full but not bloated. Puppies may start lapping from a bowl.
- **Environment:** The floor temperature of the nest box should be 70 to 75 degrees from this point onward.
- **Behavior and training:** Adult eye color will begin to appear, but may not reach final shade for another 9 to 12 weeks. Puppies begin to see well and their eyes begin to look and function like adult dogs' eyes. Puppies will start cleaning themselves, though their mother will continue to do most of the serious cleaning.

4-5 weeks

- **Feeding:** Bottle feed as needed to keep pups from crying with hunger. Puppies usually can drink and eat from a saucer by 4 weeks. Weaning should be done gradually. Introduce them to solid food by offering warmed canned food, mixed with a little water into a gruel, in a shallow saucer. You can begin by placing one puppy by the plate of canned food gruel, and hoping for the best - if she starts eating, great! Her littermates will probably copy her and do the same. But without mom around to show them, many puppies do not have a clue about feeding time. The puppies will walk in it, slide in it, and track it all over the place. Sometimes one will begin lapping right away, and in its anxiety to consume as much as it can, it will often bite the edge of the plate. Some will prefer to lick the gruel from your fingers. Some will start licking your finger after they sniff it, then slowly lower your finger to the plate and hold it to the food. The puppies need to learn to eat with their heads bent down. Sometimes it takes two or three meals before they catch on. If they do not seem interested enough to even sniff

your finger, try gently opening the puppies' mouth and rubbing a little of the food on their teeth.

Hopefully then they will start licking your finger. If they're still not getting the idea, you can take a syringe (without a needle) and squirt a small amount of gruel directly into the back of their mouths.

- If there is a bitch present, she will usually begin weaning by discouraging her puppies from nursing; however, some dogs (particularly those with small litters) will allow nursing until the puppies are old enough for permanent homes. Some nursing activity is the canine equivalent of thumb-sucking, that is, for comfort only. Even if puppies appear to be nursing, they may not be getting all the nutrition they need from mom. Make sure they are eating food and gaining weight.
- Be sure that the puppies have access to fresh water in a low, stable bowl.
- **Behavior and training:** Begin housebreaking at four weeks. Use a pile of newspapers in a corner. After each feeding, place the puppy on the papers or outside for him to go to the bathroom. Be patient! He may not remember to do this every time, or may forget where to find the papers, but he will learn quickly. Be sure to give the puppies lots of praise when they first start using their papers or cry to go out. It is a good idea to confine the puppies to a relatively small space, because the larger the area the puppies have to play in, the more likely they will forget where the papers are. Keep the papers clean and away from their food.

5-6 weeks

- **Feeding:** Feed gruel 4 times a day. Thicken gruel gradually. Introduce dry food and water. If you are fostering a litter with their mother, continue weaning. For reluctant eaters, try mixing any meat-flavored human baby food with a little water. The meat flavor is often more appealing to the picky eaters.
- **Behavior and training:** At about five 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. The others will quickly follow.

6-7 weeks

- **Feeding:** Should be eating dry food well. Feed the puppies at least three meals daily. If one puppy appears food-possessive, use a second dish and leave plenty of food out so that everyone is eating. Although they may not eat much at a single sitting, they like to eat at frequent intervals throughout the day.
- **Behavior and training:** By this time, you have "mini-dogs." They will wash themselves, play games with each other, their toys, and you, and many will come when you call them. Be sure to take them to their papers or outside after meals, during play sessions, and after naps. These are the usual times that puppies need to eliminate.

7-8 weeks

- **Feeding:** Offer dry food 3 - 4 times a day. Leave down a bowl of water for them to eat and drink at will. If you have a litter with a bitch, she should only be allowing brief nursing sessions, if any. DO NOT feed the puppies table scraps.

8+ weeks

- **Feeding:** Offer dry food 2 times a day. Leave down a bowl of water for them to eat and drink at will.
- **Behavior and training:** By the end of this week, prepare yourself to find them homes or return them to the facility where they came from. They are also old enough for early spay or neuter.

Keeping Puppies Healthy

A healthy puppy has bright eyes, a nice coat, and a plump belly. Younger puppies are content to sleep between feedings. As they approach 8 weeks they begin to spend more time playing. Normal body temperature for a puppy is 100 - 102.5. Unfortunately, puppies do become ill and sometimes die while being fostered, so it is important to take steps to prevent disease and treat it appropriately as soon as it appears.

A note about treating your puppy: In general, if you need to treat a puppy, try to medicate him in an impersonal way. If you hold the puppy in your lap to medicate him, he will associate being picked up with being medicated, and think the worst every time you go to cuddle him. It is better to put the puppy up on a countertop, maybe wrapping him in a towel to administer medication. It is also worth while to give extra praise to a young puppy after medicating him, as this will help ease the stress of the situation.

Recognizing illness when to call a veterinarian

If you have a sick puppy, you should always at least call a veterinarian and discuss the problem. They may advise you to come in or provide you with general advice over the phone.

One of the first steps you can take to evaluate your puppy's health is to take his temperature. To take the temperature of your puppy, you will need a regular human thermometer and some KY Jelly. Don't forget to shake down the mercury in the thermometer first. Then wipe KY on the thermometer and insert just the tip into the puppy's anus. Hold it there for at least a minute and then read. If the puppy's temperature is over 103 or under 99, it is important to call the veterinarian.

Before leaving a veterinary facility, always ask for a copy of the treatment sheet. Information on this sheet is important for future follow-up treatment.

If a foster puppy should die, you should keep the body cool but not frozen and transport it to the facility where it came from so that a full autopsy can be performed.

Abnormal signs to watch for in a puppy:

- Continuous diarrhea
- Continuous vomiting
- Bleeding of any kind: nose, urine, stool
- Any trauma: it by car, dropped, limping, stepped on, unconscious

Specific disease conditions in puppies Diarrhea

Diarrhea is common in puppies and be caused by parasites, viruses, bacteria, food changes, stress, overfeeding, and other causes. If the diarrhea is mild and the puppy is otherwise alert and playful, you can try giving it less food but more often, and if it is over 4 weeks old, you can add 1/8 teaspoon of Metamucil to the food to help get rid of the diarrhea. If the diarrhea is severe, lasts more than 3 or 4 feedings, or contains blood or obvious parasites, you should call a veterinarian and bring in as much as possible of the feces in a Ziploc bag.

One of the causes of diarrhea that may be detected by microscopic examination in coccidiosis, due to the protozoan *Eimeria* spp. This single celled parasite is most common in kittens, but occasionally found in adults. Treatment will consist of about ten days of medication in either liquid or pill form. If the symptoms of coccidiosis persist following treatment, an effort will be made to identify other possible causes of diarrhea.

Mites

Mange mites are tiny parasites which live on the skin and hair follicles of puppies. Sarcoptic mites cause intense itching, noted by destructive scratching. Because mites are microscopic organisms your veterinarian will need to perform a skin scraping to diagnose their presence. Different types of treatment may then be prescribed depending on the type of mite that your puppy has.

Fading puppies

Once in a while, one or more puppies in a litter that were healthy and vigorous at birth will begin to "fade" after a week or two of life. They will stop growing, begin to lose weight, stop nursing and crawling. They may cry continuously and lose the ability to stay upright. The mother dog may push them out of the nest, where they often chill and starve to death. Puppies fade very quickly - they will not last 48 hours without veterinary care, and many will not recover even with intensive care.

Often there is no clear cause or reason for this condition - it has been linked to birth defects, environmental stress and infectious disease. Early veterinary treatment is imperative, but even with tube feeding, rehydration and monitoring, many, if not most, fading puppies will die.

Fleas

Fleas are insects that love to feed on puppies. Although each flea only consumes a small drop of blood, fleas commonly attack in large numbers and an infestation can literally lead to anemia and even death. It is essential that your home be free of fleas before bringing home a small puppy.

Often there is no clear cause or reason for this condition - it has been linked to birth defects, environmental stress and infectious disease. Early veterinary treatment is imperative, but even with tube feeding, rehydration and monitoring, many, if not most, fading puppies will die.

The Life Cycle of the Flea Adult fleas lay eggs, which usually drop off their animal host and accumulate in alarming numbers where the animal spends a lot of time. Dog houses, carpets, sofas and other such places are often good nesting grounds for flea eggs. Under ideal conditions, eggs hatch in 1 - 2 days or for 3 - 4 weeks before hatching. Flea eggs hatch into a larval stage which feeds on debris and organic matter and lives freely in the environment outdoors or in your home. Larvae can be effectively treated with concentrated insecticides. The larvae can develop into adult fleas in 5 days. Adult fleas prefer furry animals, but may feed on people. The common flea is hardy; it can live up to 4 months without feeding, and has a life span of up to 2 years. Fleas feed on their animal hosts, but spend most of their time off the animal. For every flea that you see, there are probably at least 100 lurking somewhere else in your home. Fortunately, the adult flea is the most sensitive to flea products.

Good Reasons to Control Fleas If your foster puppy already has fleas, it is important to remove them without harming the dog. One safe way to remove fleas from very young puppies (less than 6 - 8 weeks) is daily flea combing. Animals may be allergic to fleas. A flea bite sets off a cycle of constant itching and scratching, and your dog or cat will begin to lose hair, especially around the tail. Scratching can severely damage an animal's skin, causing hot spots. A single flea bite can cause an allergic reaction, so flea control is essential in treating the affected dog or cat.

How to Control Fleas If your foster puppy already has fleas, it is important to remove them without harming the dog. One safe way to remove fleas from very young puppies (less than 6 - 8 weeks) is daily flea combing. If the puppy is less than 6 weeks old and is heavily infested, a flea bath may be necessary to save its life. The puppy must be warm at all times. Use warm water and immediately towel it dry afterwards. Then follow up with a warm hair dryer until the puppy is completely dry. Use a shampoo labeled as safe for puppies. You can also use flea powder mixed in equal amounts of talcum powder, or a 2.5 % carbaryl powder product. If the puppy is 4 Weeks old **and** 2 lbs or more Capstar can be given orally up to once a day to kill adults fleas. This product starts to work within 90 minutes and is effective against adult fleas for 4-6 hours. It does **not** have any affect on, eggs, larva, or other adult fleas in the puppies environment. If the puppy is older than 6 weeks, * you can use topical one-time/month applications available from a veterinarian. All bedding needs to be washed in hot soapy water as soon as fleas are spotted. The most effective way to remove eggs from the house is by using a vacuum cleaner. The vacuum bag should first be treated by placing flea powder, a piece of flea collar, or flea spray inside it. The bag should be emptied immediately after vacuuming. To kill adults and larvae, the house can be treated with flea foggers or sprays, boric acid products, or other commercial products.

Ringworm

Ringworm is actually caused by a fungus, related to athletes foot. On people and dogs, ringworm is most often shaped in a regular ring. The dog's fur will fall out, leaving a round bare spot with a visible ring. Ringworm causes little distress and not an emergency, but it **is contagious to cats, dogs, and people**. If you or your pets contract ringworm, you will need to seek treatment from your doctor and veterinarian (respectively). Everything the puppies touched while in your home will need to be disinfected with a bleach solution (at least 1 part bleach to 32 parts water) for at least one hour contact time, as ringworm spores can easily spread among other dogs and re-infect their hosts. If you have fostered a litter with ringworm, you should wait four weeks before fostering a new litter.

Kennel cough

Kennel cough is an extremely contagious respiratory disease that is often seen in animal shelters. Puppies with kennel cough typically cough or sneeze, and have nasal discharge. Kennel cough is often very difficult for puppies to overcome and will require veterinary attention.

Vomiting

If your puppy is vomiting, it is possible that the puppy is eating his meals too quickly. You should watch him when he eats and not allow him to eat too much too quickly. If your puppy is over 4 weeks old you may mix a little Kaopectate (1/8 - 1/4 teaspoon) into his food. If your puppy vomits 2-3 times in a row, it should see a veterinarian.