
RAISING PUPPIES WITH A MOM

Watching moms raise their puppies is fun and incredibly rewarding! Usually mom will do most of the work, but newborn and young puppies are very delicate, and sometimes she may need your help. Puppies in their first months of life are susceptible to what we refer to as fading puppy syndrome (hypothermia and hypoglycemia), so being hypervigilant is important. Even the slightest sign of illness can quickly turn into a life-threatening situation. Please review this [Fading Puppy Protocol](#) so that you are adequately prepared if such a life-threatening situation were to arise.

What supplies should I have on hand?

- Hand sanitizer to use before handling the puppies. Note: puppies under 3 weeks should never be handled by anyone from outside the home, and even later on handling by visitors should be minimal; puppies this young are extremely vulnerable to germs, with parvo being a major concern.
- Newspapers or puppy pee pads.
- Scale to weigh the puppies to be sure they are gaining weight for the first 4 weeks. This can be a food scale since most puppies weigh less than a pound when born. You can use a bowl to contain the pup while you weigh it. Just be sure the scale is zeroed out with the bowl on the scale when you put the puppy into the bowl. You don't want to include the weight of the bowl in the puppy's weight.
- Bleach to add to the laundry when washing the towels or blankets.
- Baby wipes will help to clean up small messes or wipe off the puppies. Just be sure the puppies do not get cold.
- Heating pad to keep puppies warm; **no auto-shut off**. Normally, a mom's body temperature will keep her pups toasty, but you should have a heating pad on hand in case she needs help with this, or in case you need to perform the Fading Puppy Protocol. If you need to use a heating pad, it should be used on the medium setting and covered with a towel. Make sure the puppies are NEVER placed directly on the heating pad. Note: It is very important the pups are kept warm and away from drafts or fans. Chilling is the number one danger to newborn puppies.
- Towels/blankets.
- Good quality puppy food (pate style wet, kibble, formula if able). The puppy food is what mom should be eating before the pups are weaned and what the puppies can eat later.

IMPORTANT BEHAVIOR NOTE: It is normal for momma dogs to be protective of their puppies; it's part of what makes them a good mom. Because of this, make sure the momma dog and her babies have a space to themselves without other animals or frequent human traffic. We recommend putting other animals away when momma

leaves the room to go outside. Please leave a lightweight drag leash on momma at all times, so you are able to easily take her outside without grabbing her collar. If she growls at you, other pets, or other household members, this is a warning that she is uncomfortable. Please respect it and give her space. If you have any concerns, please email our Behavior Team at dog@hsdcoho.org

How do I help mom with her puppies?

PUPPIES 0-4 WEEKS OLD

Daily requirements:

- Puppies should be nursing vigorously and regularly.
- Puppies should be kept warm at all times.
- Puppies should be weighed and weights recorded in the table below.

If you see the following symptoms, immediately begin the [Fading Puppy Protocol](#) (do not wait to get in touch with the clinic--they can only take the same steps for fading puppies):

- Extreme Lethargy - not getting up, unable to stand, not responding when pet
- Gaspng for breath
- Whining/Crying out
- Cold to the touch

The following should be considered red flags

- Very watery or explosive diarrhea
- Bloody diarrhea
- Not eating, even missing one meal

The following should be considered emergencies

- Seizures
- Excessive vomiting
- At 2-4 weeks old: White or grey gums
- Lethargy or listlessness

0-2 WEEKS OLD:

- **Care:**
 - Puppies should nurse vigorously and compete for nipples. Newborns can nurse up to 45 minutes at a time. Be sure to observe puppies nursing at least once a day, if the mom will permit it, and make sure that all of them are nursing and are not getting pushed away by other puppies. A great deal of activity and crying could indicate a problem with milk flow, quality, or availability. When the mom re-enters the area, there should be some fussing for only a few minutes before everyone has settled down to serious nursing.
 - If any of them don't appear to be thriving you might need to gently pull them back a little to ensure they are actually nursing and not just

mouth the teat. You might also need to give some of the smallest ones some alone time with mom to make sure they are getting enough milk.

- Be sure to have plenty of food and water available for mom. Momma should be eating puppy food and will eat much more food than usual while she is nursing. Most bags of puppy food will indicate how much to feed a nursing mom daily. In addition to dry food you can mix a can of wet puppy food for a yummy mix for momma to eat. Provide her with as much food as she will eat. You can also leave a bowl of dry food out for her to eat at will. Lots of water will be needed too. Replenish the water as needed.
- For the first couple of weeks, the puppies will be nursing or sleeping. They will need to be kept warm and if necessary you can use the heating pad to provide additional heat. Remember to keep the setting on low and never put the puppies directly on it.
- Mom will stimulate the puppies to pee and poop by licking them, and she will swallow everything they eliminate. This is normal behavior and makes your job easier! Again, if it seems that mom is not doing this you may need to help stimulate the puppies to pee and poop as they can't do this on their own for the first couple of weeks. This is very easy - you just hold the puppy and gently rub a warm, damp cotton ball, baby wipe, or cloth on their bottoms shortly after they have nursed. They should eliminate then.
- Keeping the puppies warm is critical. Please do not bathe them.
- Weigh puppies once daily and record their weight in the table below to accurately assess growth. **If any of the pups lose weight 3 times in a row, or if any of them drop 10% of their body weight between weigh-ins, find medical help.**
- Healthy puppies at 1-2 weeks 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.
- Minimize handling the puppies as much as possible.
- **Milestones:**
 - Ear canals open between 5 and 8 days.
 - Eyes 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.
- **Behavior:**
 - You should observe the mom's overall demeanor with the puppies. Most dogs are excellent moms, but occasionally a mom will be too rough or hurt the puppies. If you have any concerns about this, please contact the Behavior Team at **dog@hscOhio.org**.
 - Puppies this young will sleep 90% of the time and eat the other 10%.

2-4 WEEKS OLD:

- **Care:**

- At this age the pups can urinate and defecate on their own.
- Unless your puppies are exhibiting any signs of illness, they should not need any medical care until they turn 2 weeks.
- At 2 weeks, the puppies will need to be dewormed. Prepare the dewormer for you to pick up. It's very important to not expose puppies to the germs in the clinic unless it is absolutely necessary for them to be seen.
- Continue to weigh each puppy daily, regardless of outward, visible health. Sometimes puppies this age may appear to be thriving and growing but without measuring food and output there is no way to know for sure how your puppy(ies) are doing. Puppies can go downhill very quickly, often within 24hrs.
- Avoid too many guests. Minimizing exposure will help keep the puppies healthy.
- Puppies this age should be kept indoors to avoid exposure to parvo and other illnesses
- At 3 weeks, puppies will start cleaning themselves, although their mother will continue to do most of the serious cleaning. Please continue to avoid bathing them. 6 weeks is the earliest we recommend bathing puppies. If there is a specific reason why you think you need to bathe your foster puppy (e.g., urine scalding), seek medical help.

- **Milestones:**

- Eyes are opening now, and the puppies are beginning to hear sounds. Adult eye color will begin to appear at 3-4 weeks, but may not reach final shade for another 9-12 weeks. Puppies begin to see well, and their eyes begin to look and function like adult dogs' eyes.
- Puppies are beginning to move around some and trying to stand up. Puppies begin to crawl at around day 18 and can stand at around day 21.

- **Behavior:**

- Mom will begin to spend larger periods of time out of the nest, though she will not go far from it.
- Puppies 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 several 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.

PUPPIES 4-8+ WEEKS OLD

Daily requirements:

- Puppies should be allowed to free feed and should have easy access to fresh food and water.
- Puppies should be weighed and weights recorded in the table below.

If you see the following symptoms, you must immediately begin the [Fading Puppy Protocol](#) (do not wait to get in touch with the clinic--they can only take the same steps for fading puppies):

- Extreme Lethargy - not getting up, unable to stand, not responding when pet
- Gasping for breath
- Whining/Crying out
- Cold to the touch

The following should be considered red flags:

- Decrease in appetite
- Diarrhea that is not improving in 72hrs
- Very watery or explosive diarrhea, even once
- Losing interest in playing with littermates
- Suddenly being "bullied" by littermates
- Losing 0.5lb in a 24hr period.
- Bloody diarrhea
- Vomiting

The following should be considered emergencies:

- Seizures
- White or gray gums
- Lethargic or unresponsive
- Temperature of above 102 degrees F (at rest)

4-5 WEEKS OLD:**• Care:**

- At this age, you will need to start to wean the puppies with gruel.
- Gruel is watered down, warmed canned food (the same food you are feeding mom)--pate style, not chunky-- that is blended and made into a thin paste. If your puppies are eating the gruel well and seem hungry they can be started on the same high-quality canned puppy food you are feeding mom.
- Ideally gruel is diluted with puppy milk replacer. Because this is expensive, and APA! is not able to provide it, water is used as the alternative. If you would like to purchase milk replacer to use, APA! recommends Esbilac. Royal Canin Puppy Mousse is an excellent food to use as gruel for the early weaning process because it already has formula in it and is the perfect consistency. Both of these can be found at most pet stores.
- Weaning should be a gradual process that occurs over several weeks. Puppies need time to learn important behaviors from their mother and

littermates, including how to interpret signs of dominance, inhibit their own biting habits, and submit to more dominant dogs. It is also preferable for the mother to slowly dry up her milk supply. Weaning can definitely be a stressful time for puppies and mother and, whenever possible, should be a gradual and supervised process.

- Mom 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.
- If momma is not doing this herself, you can help the weaning process along by separating her from her litter for a few hours at a time. While separated, introduce the puppies to eating from a shallow plate. This time apart will reduce the pups' dependency on their mother's milk and overall presence. The amount of food and the frequency and length of separation can gradually be increased. As the puppies become more independent and self-confident, they can spend more and more time away from their mother until they are completely weaned.
 - Some puppies may prefer to lick the gruel from your fingers, if this is the case; slowly lower your finger to the plate and hold it to the food. This way the puppies will learn to eat with their heads bent down. Be patient, 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 rub a little bit of the food on their teeth. Hopefully this will result in the puppy starting to lick 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 their mouths.
 - Be sure that the puppies always have access to fresh water in a low, stable bowl.
- **Behavior:** Begin housebreaking at four weeks of age. This can be done by using a pile of newspapers or training pads in a corner. After each feeding, place the puppy on the papers, 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. 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 OLD:

- **Care:**
 - Feed gruel 4 times a day. Thicken the gruel gradually by reducing the amount of water mixed with it and gradually mix in dry puppy food.

Introduce dry food and water, but continue weaning. For reluctant eaters, try mixing some puppy milk replacer into the gruel or tempt the puppy with some meat-flavored human baby food mixed with a bit of water. The familiar formula taste and smell or the baby food's meat flavor is often more appealing to the picky eaters than dog food. Once the puppy accepts the formula-based gruel or baby food, gradually mix in dry puppy food until the puppy has been weaned like the other puppies.

- At 6 weeks, puppies can be bathed to be kept clean but should be blow dried and fed immediately after.
- **Milestones:**
 - At 6 weeks, APA! foster puppies have their first visit to the APA! clinic. At that appointment, they will receive a microchip, annual Bordetella vaccine, and their first DAPP shot; they will then be given DAPP boosters every 2-4 weeks until they are 5 months old.
 - When the pups are 6 weeks old, mom will be made available for adoption!
- **Behavior:** 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. The others will quickly follow.

6-7 WEEKS OLD:

- **Care:** By this age the puppies should be eating dry food well. Feed the puppies at least 3-4 times a day. If one puppy appears food-possessive, use a second dish and leave plenty of food out so that everyone can eat at the same time. Although the puppies may not eat much at a single sitting, they usually like to eat at frequent intervals throughout the day.
- **Behavior:** 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 after meals, during play sessions, and after naps. These are the usual times that puppies need to eliminate.

7-8+ WEEKS OLD:

- **Care:** Offer dry food at least 3 - 4 times a day. Leave down a bowl of water for them to eat and drink at will. Mom should only be allowing brief nursing sessions, if any. Do not feed the puppies table scraps.
- **Milestones:**
 - At 7 weeks APA! foster puppies are made available for adoption. Please remember that because they are not fully vaccinated, APA! puppies cannot do meet and greets with a potential adopter's dog.
 - At 10 weeks APA! foster puppies are given a surgery date to be spayed and neutered as long as there is no medical reason to wait. The surgery date may be a few weeks in the future depending on how many other dogs are currently scheduled. Puppies that weigh less than 2 pounds or that are sick will not have surgery until they are well and

weigh at least 2 pounds. Puppies who were considered Distemper exposed and are cleared can be scheduled for surgery immediately, provided they meet the other criteria. Puppies considered Distemper watch or confirmed Distemper must be clear of symptoms for a total of 30 days before they can be scheduled for surgery.

Vaccination

Until they have been vaccinated, you should carefully restrict their exposure to any disease. This means checking with visitors to make sure they have not been around any sick dogs and ensuring they always wash or sanitize their hands before handling the puppies.

Puppies that have not been fully vaccinated (usually around 20 weeks) should not be allowed on the ground in any public area where other dogs have been, e.g., pet stores, dog parks, and even neighborhood parks.

Dehydration

Puppies stay hydrated by drinking water and eating canned food. Most puppies will adequately hydrate themselves. You can do a quick elasticity test. Pinch a little skin between your thumb and forefinger on your pup's back. When you release it, it should pop back into place immediately. Puppies should always have access to clean water.

Temperature

Your puppy's temperature does not need to be taken regularly. However, if you are concerned a puppy is too cold or running a fever it is best if you can take a rectal temperature. It is not difficult to take a rectal temperature but is easiest with two people. Using petroleum jelly or a similar substance insert the thermometer into the rectum. A normal temperature is between 100.5 and 102.5.

Hypoglycemia

Puppies will quickly become hypoglycemic if they miss even one meal. Just like a baby, puppies need to eat 3-4 times a day and always have access to fresh food. If puppies become even slightly hypoglycemic they can begin to go downhill very quickly.

Signs of hypoglycemia are:

- wobbliness
- listlessness
- seizures

Anemia

Puppies are also susceptible to anemia. Anemia is a loss of red blood cells that, in puppies, is most often caused by an infestation of fleas or intestinal worms. The easiest way to check for anemia is to look for white or very pale gums. Normal puppy gum color is close to salmon pink.

Parvovirus - signs and symptoms

Parvovirus is a highly contagious, serious, life-threatening condition that affects the intestinal tract and causes severe vomiting and diarrhea. The key to survival is early detection. The signs and symptoms are:

- Decrease or loss of appetite, even missing one meal
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea in conjunction with one of the above
- Lethargy

Meatball Test

For the most part a healthy puppy will always be excited to eat a treat. As a rule of thumb if a puppy is refusing to eat a meatball of canned food they may be sick. If you are concerned your puppy may be sick with either fever, parvo, parasites, or respiratory infection please offer a meatball of yummy food.

Activity

It is important to recognize a lethargic puppy from a tired puppy. Puppies will normally play, play, play then get tired and sleep for a period of time. If your puppy is going through this cycle, that is normal.

Socialization

Socialization is very important. Please refer to these resources: [Puppy Basics](#) and [The Puppy's Rule of 12](#). However, puppies that have not had any vaccinations should not be meeting any people outside the immediate household.

Weight and Food Tracking: Puppies 0-4 weeks old

Puppy's name:
 Puppy's age:
 Puppy's primary/secondary color:
 Puppy's markings:

Date	AM/PM	Type of Food Eating	Weight