

Puppies!

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Intro

Very often, underage puppies (under 8 weeks of age) are brought to shelters without their mothers and need to be properly cared for in order to survive and then they can be adopted into permanent homes when they come of age at about 8 weeks old. Puppies picked for the foster program will be able to eat at least canned food on their own. Bottle feeding and puppy formula should not be needed, but can supplement their diets and give picky eaters or slow growers added nutrition.

Supplies

- **Large box, carrier or crate:** 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 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:** The shelter will provide both hard and canned food (if needed) for your foster puppies.
- **Plenty of clean towels and blankets**
- **Toys:** Plastic, disinfect-able toys are good to reuse for new litters. Clean tennis balls and old stuffed socks. Beware of stuffed toys with small plastic parts that could break off and be swallowed causing digestive emergencies.
- **Baby gates and exercise pens:** For confining the puppies as needed.

Getting Started

Eat, sleep, play and poo – not necessarily in that order! Make sure your foster pups have everything they need and are kept in an indoor only environment in an area that is easy to clean like a bathroom, laundry room, or kitchen. Puppies need a warm, dry safe place to sleep. A crate is recommended as it is never too early to begin housetraining. If you are using a crate to confine the puppies, be sure to never leave them in the crate too long – their age in months is the number of hours they should be confined to a crate. The puppies should always have access to clean water and hard food. Soft food can be offered at scheduled feeding times. Plenty of appropriate toys to chew on and play with should be available and rotated in and out of the puppies’ area. Puppies will put anything in their mouths so puppy-proof the area! Baby gates are a good way to keep the puppies where you want them and exercise pens are good for outside playtime. Puppies need to be kept clean. This means lots of baths (remember the mom would have licked the pups all the time to keep them clean). Use a gentle, non-medicated puppy or baby shampoo. Don't get water in the ears or soap in the eyes. Use warm water. Dry well and warm the pups up very quickly. Don't be surprised if you are washing the pups more than once daily. Even outgoing, friendly puppies should be allowed 24 hours to accustom themselves to their new home a quiet room, but if they seem content and happy after the initial “chill-out period” they can be cuddled and played with freely.

Shy pets will need more encouragement. Try sitting on the floor allowing the puppies to approach you or avoid you as they please, and play freely around you. You can also tempt them with small treats and food to convince them that you are not as scary as you appear. Always praise positive interaction. Any introductions of puppies to other cats or dogs should be made with great care and under constant supervision.



No fostered animals should be allowed to mingle with your own pets or outside in your yard for the first two weeks after you bring them home. This is to protect both the foster pets and your own pets from any infectious agents they may bring from the shelter.

Feeding

A well-fed, healthy puppy has a round stomach (not bloated), and seems content. At 4-5 weeks, offer warmed canned puppy food mixed with formula or human baby food (chicken or beef) mixed with formula four times a day. Without mom around to show them, many puppies do not have a clue about feeding from a saucer. The puppies will walk in it, slide in it, and track it all over. 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. First-time eaters are messy eaters, so have the warm water and towel handy for afterward. The puppy will need it, and so will the floor. Puppies should have hard food left out all the time as well as fresh water. Constant crying is usually a sign of trouble and should be reported to the foster coordinator immediately. Make sure the puppies are eating food and gaining weight

Age 3-5 weeks: Feed gruel 4 times a day. Thicken the gruel gradually by reducing the amount of water mixed with it. Introduce dry food and water. 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 meat flavor of baby food 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.

Age 5-7 weeks: By this age the puppies 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 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.

Age 7-8 weeks: Offer dry food 3 - 4 times a day. Leave down a bowl of water for them to eat and drink at will. Do not feed the puppies table scraps!



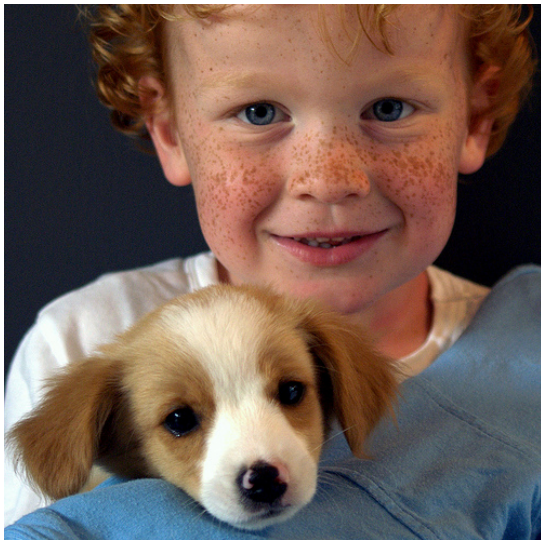
Eliminating

Don't have unrealistic expectations. At this age, your puppy can probably start the basics of housetraining, but cannot be expected to master the art of always eliminating outside. Take him out after every nap and meal and praise him if he does "go" in the yard, but expect more accidents than successes. A supply of old newspapers will come in very handy at this stage. Encourage them to go potty on the papers if someone is not available to take them out of doors.

Socialization

A huge part of your job as a foster home is to convince the puppies that humans are kind and loving, and that other pets do not pose any threat. The primary socialization period of puppies is between 3 and 13 weeks. This means that you need to get the puppies used to people and other animals before finishing their vaccination program. This period in the puppy's life is critical for development of primary social relationships with humans and other animals. Puppies that are isolated from humans and other animals during this period are significantly more likely to develop behavioral problems (such as fear and aggression), than puppies that are provided the opportunity to get socialized with other animals and people.

You should not endanger your foster puppies to dangerous germs and bacteria. They should remain in your home and yard only and never go to a dog park, pet store or other areas where there have been lots of other animals.



If you have friends, family or neighbors who would like their pets to meet your foster pet, you should be certain those pets are vaccinated and not showing any signs of illness and they should come to your home for play dates.

It is important for your foster puppies to have interaction with all members of the household as soon as possible. Remember, they are still babies and must be handled with care. Start to introduce the pup(s) to household noises, grooming procedures, new people, and pets. Early socialization and enabling the puppy to feel secure in its own environment will help prevent many problems from arising in the future.

Think about all of the things that would be scary or confusing to you if you were a puppy - children, stairs, things with wheels (strollers and bicycles especially), vacuum cleaners, hair dryers, etc. In a gentle and calm way, try to introduce your fosters to as many things as you can possibly think of – it will result in a confident, easy going, well socialized and HIGHLY adoptable dog!

There is no such thing as a "bad" puppy and it is useless to punish a "naughty" puppy. Their little minds do not grasp deductive reasoning. Puppies are easily distracted with a toy or a treat when being mischievous rather than punishment and scolding. By providing toys, chews, scratching poles etc. you can get a puppy on its right track to being somebody's well-behaved pet.

Growth and Development



Age 3-5 Weeks: 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, 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: 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.

6-8 Weeks: 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.

8 Weeks: The pups are almost ready for Adoption! Make sure arrangements have been made to get them spayed or neutered and micro - chipped so they will be ready for a new home!

