

Foster Home Handbook

Courtesy of Best Friends Animal Society

Chapter 1 Introduction: Foster Home Q & A

What do foster homes do?

Foster homes allow our partners to rescue homeless animals from a variety of situations by providing these animals with temporary care and shelter until they are adopted. Foster homes are asked to provide foster animals with plenty of love, adequate food and water, shelter from the elements, and exercise. Administering medication may also be necessary. In addition to providing the basics, foster homes may also be asked to transport foster animals to veterinary appointments and adoption events. Depending on the individual policies for each rescue partner, foster homes will likely be reimbursed for supplies, such as food, litter and toys, and for any veterinary costs incurred in the care of the animal.

Foster homes play a crucial role in rehabilitating rescued animals. They are in a unique position to help abused or neglected animals learn how to love and trust again. Foster homes can help these animals become more “adoptable” by providing socialization and basic training. By teaching or re-teaching an animal how to live in a home setting, foster homes help increase the odds for a smooth and successful transition into a permanent adoptive home.

In the case of orphaned baby animals, foster homes provide surrogate parenting and round-the-clock care for tiny animals that are too young to survive on their own. By providing orphaned animals with plenty of nutrition, love, and stimulation during their first eight weeks of life, foster homes help ensure their health and survival as adults.

What do foster homes do? Any way you look at it, foster homes save lives.

What are the requirements for becoming a foster home?

Our rescue partners are always looking for more foster homes. The only general requirements are that you love animals and have the time and resources to provide a foster animal with adequate care. Other requirements will vary depending upon the specific needs of a given foster animal. Some animals, for example, will need fenced yards, extra time commitments (as is the case with orphaned newborns), isolation from personal pets, etc. The rescue organization makes every effort to match foster homes with an appropriate rescue group.

What kinds of animals need foster care?

Animals needing foster care include dogs, cats, and occasionally bunnies. Foster homes are needed for adults, babies, moms with newborns, and orphaned newborns. Foster homes are also needed for animals who are ill and/or need medical care. Many foster homes choose to specialize in fostering a specific kind of animal, while others choose to foster whatever animal is in need.

The majority of animals in need of foster care are rescued from shelter environments. Dogs usually need help with basic training and sometimes need a refresher course in house-training. All foster animals will need plenty of love and reassurance that humans are not to be feared.

How long do animals spend in foster care?

The time an animal needs to spend in foster care ranges from one night to several months. Any time commitment a foster home can make is desperately needed and appreciated.

How do foster animals find permanent adoptive homes?

Our rescue partners take full responsibility for finding permanent adoptive homes for foster animals. Foster homes are encouraged to let people know that their foster animals are available for adoption, but any person interested in adopting an animal needs to contact the rescue partner to complete the adoption application procedure.

Rescue organizations show their animals at offsite adoption venues around the state, usually on a weekly basis.

Foster homes are asked to bring their foster animals to adoption events and are encouraged to stay as long as possible in order to provide information to potential adopters. Adoptions are handled on a case-by-case basis and

every effort is made to match animals with homes that meet their specific needs. Foster homes can help immensely in this process by providing information regarding an animal's personality, training, time requirements and other needs. Any input given by a foster home is appreciated and taken into consideration during the adoption process.

Chapter 2 Cats and Kittens (over eight weeks)

INTRODUCTION

For many people, cats and kittens are the easiest kinds of animals to foster. They don't require a lot of time and yet they give plenty of love in return. Many foster homes find that they are even comfortable fostering more than one cat at a time. Whether you are interested in fostering one cat or many cats over time, the information in this chapter will help you to familiarize yourself with some of the common needs, behavioral issues and health concerns that are associated with fostering cats and kittens.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

The following is a checklist of items that you will need to foster a cat or kitten. *Please check with the rescue partner to see what supplies or reimbursements they can provide.*

Checklist

- Separate room or large kennel to keep foster kitty separate from personal pets for at least two weeks following rescue (*this may vary among different rescue partners*)
- Litter box
- Food and water bowls
- Scratching post and/or toys to help keep your foster kitty busy (and away from your furniture and carpet!)
- Litter
- High-quality cat or kitten food (it's a good idea to have both dry and canned food on hand in case you have a picky eater)
- Cat bed, blankets, or towels to provide your foster kitty with a comfortable place to sleep

BEHAVIORAL ISSUES

It is common for a cat to experience some behavioral problems and need a period of adjustment when placed into a new environment. The following is a list of common behavioral problems as well as suggestions for behavior modification.

Problem #1: Aggression toward other cats

Solution: Prevent aggression before it occurs by introducing cats gradually. For instance, try placing the two cats on opposite sides of a door. Let them get used to each other's smells and sounds before opening the door. You may even want to try pushing small treats under the door from one cat to the other. The cats will think that the treats are coming from the cat on the other side of the door. When you do introduce the cats, try to make sure that they are away from any area in your home where one cat may feel territorial (i.e., a favorite sleeping or eating place, or a favorite toy). Taking these extra steps in the beginning will help ensure a smooth transition into your home.

Problem #2: Scratching furniture or carpet

Solution: Provide something appropriate for the cat to scratch. All cats scratch. The scratching motion allows the outer, frayed layers of the cat's nails to be removed. While it is very difficult to try and teach a cat not to scratch at all, it is quite easy to redirect the cat's scratching to a designated scratching post. Cats like to do most of their scratching activity right when they wake up. Keep this in mind and make sure that the scratching post you provide is near where the cat naps. If the cat insists on scratching in an inappropriate place, try using a squirt bottle to deter the cat from that location. For behavior modification to be successful, do not scold the cat; just provide a quick squirt with the squirt bottle. You want the cat to associate the squirt with scratching in the inappropriate place, not with you. You can also try placing double-sided tape on the area where the cat likes to scratch. Cats don't like sticky surfaces and will usually leave the area alone.

Problem #3: Not using the litter box

Solution: There are several common reasons why cats don't use their litter boxes. When introduced to a new environment, a cat may simply not know or remember where the litter box is located. Make sure to confine a new foster cat to a small area (like a laundry room or bathroom) for several days before allowing the cat to have more space. This will help ensure that the cat knows where to find the litter box when he needs it. It is also very important to keep the litter box as clean as possible. In general, cats are extremely clean animals and most cats will do their business elsewhere if their litter box becomes too soiled or if the litter box is too close to their food and/or water. If more than one cat is using the same litter box, it may be necessary to provide extra litter boxes so each cat can have his/her own. If none of these suggestions help, the source of the problem may be a medical condition. Urinary tract infections are fairly common in cats and almost always result in litter box problems. If you suspect a urinary tract infection, contact the rescue partner to set up a veterinary appointment.

Problem #4: Chewing on plants or other inappropriate items

Solution: There are a number of taste deterrents available on the market. Some companies even make formulas specifically for plants, furniture, and other items. Taste deterrents aren't that expensive and are usually pretty effective. You can also try using a squirt bottle to discourage cats from chewing on inappropriate items. Be aware that many plants are toxic to cats when ingested. It is very important that you find an effective deterrent or move the plant(s) to an area that is not accessible to the cat(s).

NOTE: Cats do not respond well to punishment. When dealing with behavioral problems, focus on behavior modification, not punishment. Physically punishing a cat won't do anything but damage the bond between human and cat.

HEALTH ISSUES

Because most foster cats are rescued from shelter environments, it is very difficult for our rescue partners to ensure that they will always be healthy. A cat that appears healthy at the time of rescue could easily begin to show signs of illness several days later. For this reason, it is very important that foster homes keep their own cats up to date on vaccinations. Because cats are relatively easy to keep separate, we encourage foster homes to isolate foster cats in a separate room or large kennel for a period of at least two weeks following rescue. Most illnesses should be apparent within those two weeks. We also suggest that foster homes provide foster cats with separate food bowls, water bowls, and litter boxes for the duration of their stay.

Common Illnesses in Cats

The following information is intended to help you better understand and recognize some of the more common illnesses in cats.

Panleukopenia (Feline Distemper)

Panleukopenia (sometimes called feline distemper) is a viral infection that most commonly affects kittens and young cats. Left untreated, panleukopenia is almost always fatal. Even with intensive treatment, the majority of cats showing signs of panleukopenia will die. Unfortunately, this illness can be frustrating to deal with because the virus can survive in the environment for up to a year. This means that other unvaccinated cats can become infected with panleukopenia simply by coming into contact with places where an infected cat has been. A bleach solution is the best way to disinfect areas that may have been contaminated. The vaccine for panleukopenia is considered very effective.

Signs & Symptoms: Fever, diarrhea, lethargy, vomiting, loss of appetite

Treatment: Veterinary care, including fluid therapy and antibiotics

Transmission: Very contagious to other cats, especially through contact with infected feces or vomit

Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)

The term "upper respiratory infection" is used to refer to any illness that affects a cat's upper respiratory system. URIs are very common in shelter cats. Some of the more serious URIs (for which there are vaccines) are listed separately in this section. Following is information that applies to all upper respiratory infections.

Signs & Symptoms: Sneezing, runny nose and eyes, fever

Treatment: Veterinary care, including antibiotics

Transmission: Very contagious to other cats

Rhinotracheitis

Rhinotracheitis is a type of upper respiratory infection. Rhino often infects cats that also have calicivirus. The vaccine for rhinotracheitis is considered very effective.

Signs & Symptoms: Sneezing, coughing, fever, runny nose and eyes

Treatment: Veterinary care, including antibiotics

Transmission: Very contagious to other cats

Calicivirus

Calicivirus is a virus that attacks the lungs and lower respiratory tract, usually causing pneumonia. Ulcers are often seen on the tongue and lips. The vaccine for calicivirus is considered very effective.

Signs & Symptoms: Loss of appetite, sneezing, runny nose and eyes, oral ulcers

Treatment: Veterinary care, including antibiotics

Transmission: Very contagious to other cats

Chlamydia

Also called pneumonitis, chlamydia attacks the respiratory tract and produces conjunctivitis. Chlamydia is a bacterium. The vaccine for chlamydia is considered very effective.

Signs & Symptoms: Loss of appetite, fever, nasal discharge, red eyes

Treatment: Veterinary care, including antibiotics

Transmission: Very contagious to other cats

Ear mites

Ear mites are tiny parasites that live in the ear canal.

Signs & Symptoms: Itching, scratching, head-shaking, dark brown discharge in the ears

Treatment: Veterinary care, including an injection or ear meds

Transmission: Contagious to other cats and dogs, but usually requires direct contact with the infected animal

Ringworm

Ringworm is a fungus related to athlete's foot, not actually a worm.

Signs & Symptoms: Irregularly shaped areas of fur loss; the skin in these areas will usually appear rough and scaly

Treatment: Veterinary care, including an injection and/or topical treatment

Transmission: Very contagious to other cats, dogs, and people, but usually requires direct contact with the infected animal

Fleas

Fleas are tiny insects that feed on the blood of cats, dogs, humans, and other animals. Although each flea only consumes a small drop of blood, fleas usually attack in large numbers.

Signs & Symptoms: Intense itching and scratching

Treatment: Veterinary care, including an injection and/or topical treatment

Transmission: Very contagious to other cats, dogs, and people

Round, Tape, and Hook Worms

Worms affect a cat's digestive system. They are most commonly seen in kittens and young cats.

Signs & Symptoms: Large belly, diarrhea, an inability to gain weight

Treatment: Veterinary care, including de-worming medication

Transmission: Contagious to other cats and dogs, but only through contact with (and subsequent ingestion of) feces.

Cleaning Procedures

It is important that all items and areas used by a sick foster animal be cleaned thoroughly. You can use a 10% bleach solution to reliably kill most viruses and bacteria. Items to be cleaned should be thoroughly wetted with the bleach solution and allowed to stand for several minutes before rinsing. Foster homes that have recently fostered a cat or kitten with panleukopenia (feline distemper) or another extremely contagious disease may be asked to wait several months or more before fostering another unvaccinated cat or kitten.

Routine Veterinary Care

Each rescue partner will provide foster cats with routine veterinary care prior to placement in permanent adoptive homes. The following schedule outlines the various types of routine care provided. Again, *this will vary with each group*, so please consult their individual guidelines.

To help ensure the health and safety of your foster cat, the rescue organization asks that you adhere to the guidelines set forth, including the following:

1. Always keep an ID tag attached to a properly fitted collar that will remain on your foster cat at all times.
2. Keep your foster cat indoors at all times, going outside only on a harness or into a secure cattery.
3. Let your rescue partner know if you are no longer able to care for your foster cat. Do not give your foster cat to another person or agency without first receiving permission from the rescue partner.

Chapter 3 Dogs and Puppies (over 8 weeks)

INTRODUCTION

Fostering a dog or puppy can be an extremely rewarding experience. While perhaps slightly more involved than fostering a cat, fostering a dog can be very satisfying and a lot of fun. By providing a little training and a lot of love, foster homes can drastically affect the “adoptability” of the dogs they foster. The information in this chapter will help you familiarize yourself with some of the needs, behavioral issues, and health concerns that are associated with fostering dogs and puppies.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

The following is a checklist of items that you will need to foster a dog or puppy.

Please check with your rescue partner to see what supplies or reimbursements they can provide.

Checklist

- Food and water bowls
- Leash
- High-quality dog or puppy food (it's a good idea to have both dry and canned food on hand in case you have a picky eater)
- Chew toys
- Crate or kennel (for keeping dogs safe and out of trouble while you're away and to help with house-training)
- Dog bed, blankets, or towels to provide your foster dog with a comfortable place to sleep

BEHAVIORAL ISSUES

It is common for a dog to experience some behavioral problems and need a period of adjustment when placed into a new environment. Foster homes are in a unique position to help increase the “adoptability” of their foster dogs by providing some basic training. The following is a list of common behavioral problems as well as suggestions for behavior modification.

Lack of House-Training

Chances are your foster dog will need at least a refresher course in house-training. Many rescued dogs have spent most of their lives outside and never learned the rules of living indoors. Other dogs may have once been house-trained, but may still have an accident or two when transitioning into a new home.

The most important element of effective house-training is extensive supervision, to minimize accidents. There will, of course, be times when you are unable to watch the dog constantly. During these times, you can confine the dog to a crate. The crate should be just large enough for the dog to be able to comfortably stand up, turn around, and lie down. Because a dog will try not to soil the area where he sleeps, he will usually not urinate or defecate in a crate. When the dog is allowed out of the crate, he should be taken outside immediately. If the dog eliminates outside, give him lots of praise. If the dog does not eliminate, it is important that you supervise the dog closely once you re-enter

your home. If you catch the dog having an accident in the house, take the dog straight outside and give him a chance to finish eliminating outside. If the dog does eliminate, give him lots of praise.

When house-training a dog, use common sense. Give the dog a chance to eliminate outside following meals and naps. Pay attention to the dog's behavioral signals. If you observe the dog circling, sniffing the floor, or moving toward the door, take the dog outside.

House-training Don'ts:

- Do not rub the dog's nose in it! This method of training has been proven ineffective by trainers and behaviorists. The only message a dog gets from this type of "training" is that you are angry. The dog will likely not learn to eliminate outside and may instead learn to fear you.
- Do not correct the dog after the fact! Again, this method of training has been proven ineffective. Punishing a dog for something she did much earlier will not yield the results you are looking for. Yes, the dog will behave submissively and perhaps look guilty, but this is because the dog knows you are angry, not because she knows that, earlier, she did something wrong.

House-training is not a process that happens overnight. Be patient. Any progress you can make with your foster dog on house-training will make your life easier and help improve the dog's chances for successful placement.

Chewing

Destructive chewing is a phase that all puppies go through. It usually starts around three months and can last until the dog is one year old. During this time, the dog's adult teeth are coming in and chewing helps relieve the pain. Adult dogs may also have problems with chewing, but for different reasons. Adult dogs usually chew on inappropriate things because they are anxious or bored, or because they have never been taught what is appropriate to chew on. The best solution for destructive chewing is providing your foster dog with something that is acceptable to chew on. Have plenty of chew toys available at all times. If you catch the dog chewing on something inappropriate, tell the dog "NO" in a firm (but not angry) voice, and replace the item with something more appropriate.

If the destructive chewing occurs when you are away, consider confining the dog to a crate. A crate will help keep both the dog and your home safe. It is also important to make sure that your foster dog is getting plenty of exercise. A tired dog will sleep, not chew!

Separation Anxiety

It is pretty common for foster dogs to experience some separation anxiety when left alone. The severity of the anxiety can range from pacing and whining to much more destructive behavior. A dog may experience separation anxiety simply because he has a very dependent personality, or because she is reacting to a history of abuse or abandonment. Whatever the reason, separation anxiety can be difficult to deal with because you are not around when it happens.

The most common sign that a dog may be suffering from separation anxiety is destructive behavior when left alone. A dog may scratch frantically at the door or make other attempts to get out of the house, or the dog may chew on things or engage in other destructive behaviors.

If you do have the time to work with your foster dog, there are several things you can try to help alleviate separation anxiety. Start out by leaving the dog in your home for very short intervals. Tell the dog to wait and then walk outside for a few minutes before returning. When you return to the house, praise the dog for waiting. Begin to gradually leave the dog for longer and longer periods of time. It is important that, when you leave, you remain calm and not make a big deal out of leaving. It is also important that you not be too excited when you return. You want to praise the dog, but calmly. You don't want your return to be such an exciting event that the dog anxiously anticipates the moment of your return. Perhaps the most effective treatment for separation anxiety is time. Be patient. As your foster dog spends more time with you, he will begin to feel more secure in knowing that when you leave, you always come back.

Some destructive behavior that appears to be related to separation anxiety may, in fact, be the product of boredom. Try providing chew toys or other play items that will entertain your foster dog while you are away. There are several

products on the market that work quite well. One of the more popular toys keeps dogs engaged by making them work for food or treats. Once the toy is filled with some kind of small food item, the dog must work by rolling and tipping the toy until a treat falls out. Most of these products allow you to adjust the level of difficulty, and can keep a dog entertained for significant periods of time.

Don't forget to make sure that your foster dog gets plenty of exercise. A tired dog is much less likely to engage in behaviors associated with anxiety or boredom.

HEALTH ISSUES

Because most foster dogs are rescued from shelter environments, it's difficult for rescue partners to ensure that they will always be healthy. A dog who appears healthy at the time of rescue could easily begin to show signs of illness several days later. For this reason, it is very important that foster homes keep their own dogs up to date on vaccinations.

Common Illnesses in Dogs

The following information is intended to help you better understand and recognize some of the more common illnesses in dogs.

Canine Distemper

Canine distemper is a viral disease that is often fatal. Distemper is most commonly seen in puppies 3-6 months old. Early signs resemble a severe cold. The vaccine for canine distemper is considered very effective.

Signs & Symptoms: Eye congestion and discharge, loss of appetite, vomiting, weight loss, nasal discharge, and diarrhea

Treatment: Veterinary care including fluid therapy and antibiotics

Transmission: Very contagious

Parvovirus

Parvo is a disease that is most common in puppies and young dogs. It causes the sloughing of the lining of the intestinal tract. Parvovirus can survive in the environment for six months or longer. This means that other unvaccinated dogs can become infected with parvo simply by coming into contact with places where an infected dog has been. A bleach solution is the best way to disinfect areas that may have been contaminated. The vaccine for parvovirus is considered very effective.

Signs & Symptoms: Lethargy, loss of appetite, vomiting, and diarrhea (usually bloody)

Treatment: Veterinary care, including fluid therapy and antibiotics

Transmission: Very contagious to other dogs, especially through contact with infected feces or vomit

"Kennel Cough"

Kennel cough is a respiratory tract infection that has been linked to several different viral and bacterial causes. Coughing is usually stimulated by physical exertion or by touching the throat area. Kennel cough is self-limiting, usually lasting 1-3 weeks. Antibiotics are often given to prevent secondary infections. Kennel cough is very common in shelters and other boarding facilities. There is a vaccine for bordetella, one of the main agents responsible for causing kennel cough.

Signs & Symptoms: Cough, runny nose and eyes

Treatment: Veterinary care, including antibiotics and cough suppressants

Transmission: Very contagious to other dogs

Ear Mites

Ear mites are tiny parasites that live in the ear canal.

Signs & Symptoms: Itching, scratching, head shaking, dark brown discharge in the ears

Treatment: Veterinary care, including an injection or ear drops

Transmission: Contagious to other dogs and cats, but usually requires direct contact with the infected animal

Ringworm

Ringworm is a fungus related to athlete's foot; it's not actually a worm.

Signs & Symptoms: Irregularly shaped areas of fur loss; the skin of the areas will usually appear rough and scaly

Treatment: Veterinary care, including an injection and/or topical treatment

Transmission: Very contagious to other dogs, cats and people, but usually requires direct contact with the infected animal

Fleas

Fleas are tiny insects that feed on the blood of dogs, cats, humans and other animals. Although each flea only consumes a small drop of blood, fleas usually attack in large numbers.

Signs & Symptoms: Intense itching and scratching

Treatment: Veterinary care, including an injection and/or topical treatment

Transmission: Very contagious to other dogs, cats and people

Round, Tape, and Hook Worms

Worms affect a dog's digestive system. They are most commonly seen in puppies and young dogs.

Signs & Symptoms: Large belly, diarrhea, and an inability to gain weight

Treatment: Veterinary care, including de-worming medication

Transmission: Contagious to other dogs and cats, but only through contact with (and subsequent ingestion of) feces

Cleaning Procedures

It is important that all items and areas used by a sick foster animal be cleaned thoroughly. You can use a 10% bleach solution to reliably kill most viruses and bacteria. Items to be cleaned should be thoroughly wetted with the bleach solution and allowed to stand for several minutes before rinsing. Foster homes that have recently fostered a dog or puppy with parvo or another extremely contagious disease may be asked to wait several months before fostering another unvaccinated dog or puppy.

Routine Veterinary Care

Each rescue partner will provide foster dogs with routine veterinary care prior to placement in permanent adoptive homes. The following schedule outlines the various types of routine care provided. Again, *this will vary with each group*, so please consult their individual guidelines.

1. Always keep an ID tag attached to a properly fitted collar that will remain on your foster dog at all times. To help ensure the health and safety of your foster dog, the rescue organization asks that you adhere to the guidelines set forth, including the following:
2. Keep your foster dog under your control at all times, going outside only on a leash or into a securely fenced area.
3. Let your rescue partner know if you are no longer able to care for your foster dog. Do not give your foster dog to another person or agency without first receiving permission from your rescue partner.

Chapter 4 Newborn Kittens (under 8 weeks)

INTRODUCTION

Newborns, regardless of whether or not they are with their mother, have very little chance of surviving in a shelter environment. Foster homes that foster mother cats with newborns provide a safe and healthy place for the kittens to grow and learn until they are old enough to be adopted. Foster homes that work with orphaned newborns provide everything a mother cat would provide. Orphaned kittens require 24-hour supervision and round-the-clock care. Fostering newborns of any kind is sure to be a challenging yet extremely rewarding experience.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

The following is a checklist of items that you will need to foster newborn kittens. *Please check with your rescue partner regarding help with food, KMR, or litter.*

Checklist:

- Nest box (you could use a cat carrier or a large cardboard box)
- Blankets and/or towels
- 2 litter boxes (a large litter box for mom and a small litter box for the kittens when they're old enough (a cake pan or box lid will work fine))

- Litter (use clay litter, NOT the clumping variety)
- Food and water bowls
- High-quality kitten food (it's a good idea to have both dry and canned food on hand in case you have a picky eater)
- KMR (kitten milk replacer)
- Heating pad, hot water bottle, or infrared lamp
- Toys
- Scale (although not critical for success, a food or postal scale is very helpful in monitoring small kittens' growth)
- Bottles (for feeding orphaned or rejected kittens)

PREGNANCY, LABOR, AND BIRTH

Pregnancy

During her last week of pregnancy, a mother cat may not have a big appetite because the kittens are crowding her organs. Feed her several small meals daily rather than one or two larger meals. Leave dry cat food and water out at all times. If the mother cat will not eat the food provided, try mixing it with a small amount of tuna or other fish-flavored cat food.

Prepare a nesting box; place it in a dry, warm, relatively dark, draft-free place that is out of the way of household activity. Place the mother cat in the box. If she does not want to stay, do not insist, but encourage her by petting her and giving her little food treats.

If your nursery room is not warm enough, wrap a heating pad in a towel, set it on the lowest setting, and place it under half the box so the mother has room to move away from the heat source if she chooses. You might consider wrapping duct tape around the cord; otherwise, the kittens will be apt to chew on it.

Until the mother cat delivers, fill her litter box with shredded newspaper instead of cat litter. Many cats will deliver their kittens in the litter box and newspaper provides a much cleaner environment for the cat and kittens. After the kittens are born, you may switch to the normal clay litter.

Labor

Before the delivery, the mother cat may become very irritable and restless. She will search for a place to have her kittens. Try to place her in the designated nesting box. She may choose another location to give birth, so it may be helpful to place the box in a room without any hiding places. Let her have the kittens outside of her nest box if she chooses. When delivery is complete, you may then move the mother and the kittens into the box.

Some cats may want you to stay with them and will follow you if you leave. You will probably have to spend some time soothing this kind of cat. After the birth of the first couple of kittens, she will be very busy and not as dependent on your presence. Other cats will try to get away and hide when in labor. Give this kind of cat the space she needs to feel comfortable, but check up on her regularly.

There are three stages of feline labor:

Stage 1: During the first stage, which may take up to 12 hours, the mother may purr or breathe rhythmically. She may become very active, dig at the floor, cry loudly and appear to be straining to use her litter box.

Stage 2: In the second stage, the water bag breaks and straw-like fluid is passed. Delivery will begin a few minutes later. The mother cat will lick the newborn kittens clean and bite through the umbilical cord. She is bonding with her kittens through this process and learning to recognize them as her own. It is very important that you do not disturb her. It may appear as though she is too rough, but she is actually stimulating breathing and increasing blood circulation.

Stage 3: In the final stage, the placenta follows a few minutes after delivery of a kitten. The mother will probably eat some or all of the placenta.

Birth

Kittens are born anywhere from 15-30 minutes apart, so most deliveries take 2-6 hours. The average litter is 4 to 5 kittens. The mother cat is probably finished giving birth if she seems calm and happy, although there have been some

cases in which a cat resumed delivery later. If a kitten is not born within 2 hours and the mother is continually straining or seems to be in distress, you should seek emergency veterinary care as soon as possible.

THE FIRST 8 WEEKS OF LIFE

Week 1

- A nursing mother cat cannot be overfed. Food requirements can increase up to three times the normal amount. Leave food out for the mother cat at ALL times.
- The floor temperature of the nest box should be between 85 and 90 degrees.
- The kittens' ear canals open when they are between 5 and 8 days old.
- The kittens should weigh about 4 ounces and be handled minimally.
- Kittens will sleep 90% of the time and nurse from their mother the other 10%. They should nurse vigorously and littermates should compete for nipples.
- Kittens can nurse for up to 45 minutes at a time.
- Chilling is the number one danger to newborn kittens, so keep them warm.
- Try to watch kittens nurse at least once a day. Make sure every kitten is nursing and there is not too much maneuvering for position. A great deal of activity and crying could indicate a problem with milk flow or quality. When the mother cat re-enters the nest box, there should be fussing for only a few minutes before the kittens settle down.

Week 2

- The floor temperature of the nest box should now be 80-85 degrees.
- The kittens should now weigh about 7 ounces.
- The kittens' eyes will open between 8 and 14 days. They open gradually, usually starting from the nose outward. Short-haired cats' eyes usually open earlier than those with longer hair.
- All newborn kittens have blue eyes and initially no pupils can be distinguished. The eye color is a solid, dark blue.

Week 3

- The mother cat will begin to spend more time out of the nest.
- The floor temperature of the nest box should now be 73-80 degrees.
- The kittens should now weigh about 10 ounces.
- The kittens' ears will begin to stand erect.
- The kittens should now be spending only 60-70 percent of their time sleeping.
- Kittens generally begin to crawl around day 18 and can usually stand by day 21.
- The kitten's milk teeth will begin to cut.
- Kittens will begin to play with each other, learn to sit, and will start trying to touch objects with their paws.
- During week 3, kittens should begin their socialization phase. Start to increase the amount of handling the kittens receive and try to accustom them to human contact. Avoid exposing them to anything frightening.

*See notes on socialization.

Week 4

- The floor temperature of the nest box should be 70-75 degrees from this point forward.
- The kittens should now weigh about 13 ounces.
- Adult eye color will begin to appear, although it may not be final for another 9 to 12 weeks. The kittens will begin to develop complete sound and sight orientation.
- Kittens will begin to clean themselves, although their mother will continue to do most of the serious cleaning.

- Kittens can begin to eat from a shallow saucer and should be weaned gradually from their mother's milk. The mother cat will usually begin to discourage her kittens from nursing; however, some cats (particularly those with smaller litters) will allow nursing until the kittens are around two months old.
*See notes on weaning.
- Sometimes, nursing activity is done just for comfort. Even if the kittens appear to be nursing, they may not be receiving all the nutrition they need. Make sure they are eating and gaining weight.
- At this time, kittens will begin eliminating on their own. Supply a small, low litter box and fill it with clay litter. Do NOT use the clumping variety; it is hard to clean and it is harmful if ingested.
*See notes on litter box training.

Week 5

- The kittens should now weigh about 1 pound.
- The male kittens' testicles will become visible.
- The kittens should be very active and be able to get out of the nest.
- Weaning and litter box training should continue.

Week 6

- The kittens should now weigh about 1.25 pounds.
- The kittens should have complete visual abilities. They will imitate their mother, use scratching posts, and explore the world around them.
- Continue the weaning process by thickening the gruel. Begin to introduce solid food.

Week 7

- The kittens should now weigh about 1.5 pounds.
- Nursing sessions should be brief and infrequent, if they take place at all.
- The kittens should now eat undiluted kitten food. Continue to encourage the kittens to eat dry food. Dry food is good for their teeth and will likely be what they are fed in their adoptive homes.

Week 8

- By the end of week 8, the kittens should weigh 2 pounds and be ready to be spayed or neutered.

KITTEN WEIGHT CHART

Age Weight

At birth 3.0 to 3.7 oz. (90-110 grams)

2 weeks old 7.0 to 11.0 oz. (200-300 grams)

3-4 weeks old 11.7 to 15.0 oz. (350-450 grams)

5-7 weeks old 1 to 1.5 lbs. (450-700 grams)

8 weeks old 1.7 to 2 lbs. (800-900 grams)

ORPHANED KITTENS

Newborn kittens are sometimes orphaned. Success with raising these newborns is based on following basic procedures and keeping important elements in mind. Successful rearing of orphaned kittens requires providing them with a suitable environment, the correct quantities of nutrients for different stages of growth, and a regular schedule of

feeding, sleeping, grooming and exercise. You must also provide the stimulus for urination and defecation during the first 18-21 days of life. Do this by massaging the abdomen and peri-anal area after each feeding with a cotton ball or very soft washcloth dampened with warm water (you don't want to irritate the area). You can also use mineral oil on a cotton ball to stimulate the bowels. Kittens, after 4 weeks of age, can usually eliminate without assistance.

You must also maintain their body warmth, since kittens do not have the ability to regulate and control their body temperature. Keep them out of drafts; if necessary, use a 250-watt infrared heat bulb suspended above the crate. If you need to use a heating pad, place it in front of their sleeping area, at the opening of the crate and cover it with several layers of towels.

Kitten bedding must be changed daily, and sometimes more often. Wash dirty bedding with a little bleach to disinfect it. Kittens need exercise to promote muscular and circulatory development. However, care should be taken in the first two weeks of life because their internal organs and limbs are extremely fragile. Play with and handle them prior to feeding. At least twice a week, and more often if possible, the babies need to be groomed with a soft, warm, moist cloth, wiping gently in imitation of the mother's grooming licks.

Cow's milk is not nutritious enough for kittens; they will slowly starve to death on it. Purchase kitten milk replacer (KMR) from a veterinary clinic or pet supply store for feedings. Test the temperature of the KMR before feeding. It should be warm, but not hot: around 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Don't boil the KMR, since boiling will destroy the nutritional value. You can warm the bottle by placing it in hot water for a few minutes or putting it in the microwave for no more than 10 seconds.

If constipation occurs, add 1 drop of vegetable oil to each kitten's feeding no more than once daily until the problem eases. Don't overfeed, since it can cause diarrhea and a host of other problems.

Hand-feeding can be challenging and yet very rewarding. Everyone who has done this has developed a method that works best for them; you will, too. Whether you use a baby animal bottle or a syringe, it's best to keep the kitten in a position similar to what he would experience if mama were there. In other words, don't turn the baby on his back.

Keep the bottle at a 45-degree angle to reduce the amount of air getting into the kitten's stomach.

Kitten Feeding

Feeding equipment needs to be sterilized before and between feedings. Do this by dipping the equipment in boiling water. You should also sterilize your hands before and after feedings.

Feedings should occur every 2 hours until the third week; after that, do feedings every 4 hours at night (for your sanity). Below are general guidelines for how much to feed and when to feed:

Week of life Amount to feed

1st week 3.7 cc's per ounce of body weight

2nd week 4.9 cc's per ounce of body weight

3rd week 5.7 cc's per ounce of body weight

4th week 6.3 cc's per ounce of body weight

As long as the kitten does not cry excessively, gains weight, and feels firm to the touch, the diet is meeting his/her nutritional needs.

After each feeding session, you should give each kitten a full-body once over with a barely damp washcloth, using short strokes like mom would use. This activity keeps the kittens' fur clean, teaches them how to groom, and gives them the attention and mothering that they crave.

NOTES: Here is some additional information on techniques for socialization, weaning, and litter box training.

Socialization

It is your job to help convince the kittens that humans are kind and loving. Some kittens will adjust to you and their new environment quickly, while others may seem frightened and intimidated. To help the kittens get used to you, try sitting down in the middle of their room while making phone calls. They will hear the sound of your voice, but not be threatened by it. Familiarize them with the sound of the television and radio.

When the kittens are nearly 4 weeks old, they are ready to socialize with you and each other. Try to play with your kittens daily. The outgoing and friendly kittens will be easy to play with; however, some will need a little encouragement. If your kittens are afraid and run away when you approach, try sitting or lying on the floor near them and let them come to you. When you pick a kitten up, stroke the kitten gently and speak to her in a soft tone. You want this to be a pleasant experience, so put the kitten down if she begins squirming a lot. With patience and love, most young kittens will come to tolerate and even enjoy the company of humans.

Weaning

At about 4 weeks of age, the kittens will probably start showing interest in their mom's food. Introduce the kittens to solid food by offering warmed canned food mixed into a thin gruel with a little bit of water or KMR. Place the food in a shallow saucer. Some kittens will begin lapping right away, while others will prefer to lick the gruel from your fingers. Allow them to do so and slowly lower your finger to the saucer. The kittens may bite the edge of the plate or walk in the food. Sometimes it takes two or three meals or more before they really catch on. If a kitten doesn't seem interested in the gruel at all, try gently opening the kitten's mouth and rubbing a little of the food on his tongue or teeth. Be patient; the weaning process takes time. As the kittens catch on, begin to thicken the gruel. Remember that as you thicken the gruel, you will need to make sure the kittens always have access to fresh water in a low, spill-resistant bowl.

By about 6 weeks of age, the kittens should be getting most of their nutrition from the food you are providing. The kittens should be fed at least 3 meals a day. Their stomachs are small (roughly the size of an acorn) and so they may not eat much at a single sitting. To receive adequate nutrition, kittens require small, frequent feedings. Gradually introduce the kittens to dry food by mixing it in with their gruel. By the end of 8 weeks, the kittens should be content to eat dry food alone.

Do not give the kittens cow's milk or other human foods. Cats and kittens have different nutritional needs than humans and can become ill when given some human foods.

Litter Box Training

When the kittens reach about 4 weeks of age, they will begin to eliminate on their own. You can create a small litter box out of a cake pan or box lid. Be sure to use clay litter only and avoid exposing the kittens to the clumping variety. (It is not unusual for kittens to eat litter, and the clumping variety can be dangerous if ingested.) Most kittens learn from watching mom and will use the litter box from the start.

You can encourage the kittens by showing them the litter box several times a day, especially after meals and naps. Gently take a paw and scratch at the litter. Be sure to praise the kittens when they start using the box. It is, of course, common for young kittens to make mistakes. If you find that a kitten has defecated outside the litter box, pick up the stool with a tissue and place the stool into the litter box. This should help remind the kittens where they are supposed to eliminate. It is a good idea to confine the kittens to a relatively small area because they may forget where the litter box is located if they have too much room. Be sure to always keep the litter box clean and away from their food.

HEALTH ISSUES

Because most foster kittens are rescued from shelter environments, it is very difficult for our rescue partners to ensure that they will always be healthy. A kitten that appears healthy at the time of rescue could easily begin to show signs of illness several days later. For this reason, it is very important that foster homes keep their own cats up to date on vaccinations.

It is also important that foster homes keep their newborn kittens physically separated from their personal cats for the duration of the kittens' stay. Newborn kittens are extremely vulnerable to illness. While your personal cats may be vaccinated and thereby protected from various illnesses, your cats can still carry and transmit illnesses they have been exposed to.

Common Illnesses in Newborn Kittens

The following information is intended to help you better understand and recognize some of the more common illnesses in newborn kittens.

Panleukopenia (Feline Distemper)

Panleukopenia (sometimes called feline distemper) is a viral infection that most commonly affects kittens and young

cats. Left untreated, panleukopenia is almost always fatal. Even with intensive treatment, the majority of cats showing signs of panleukopenia will die. Unfortunately, this illness can be frustrating to deal with because the virus can survive in the environment for up to a year. This means that other unvaccinated cats can become infected with panleukopenia simply by coming into contact with places where an infected cat has been. A bleach solution is the best way to disinfect areas that may have been contaminated. The vaccine for panleukopenia is considered very effective.

Signs & Symptoms: Fever, diarrhea, lethargy, vomiting, loss of appetite

Treatment: Veterinary care, including fluid therapy and antibiotics

Transmission: Very contagious to other cats, especially through contact with infected feces or vomit

Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)

The term *upper respiratory infection* is used to refer to any illness that affects a cat's upper respiratory system. URIs are very common in shelter cats. Some of the more serious URIs (for which there are vaccines) are listed separately in this section. Following is information that applies to all upper respiratory infections.

Signs & Symptoms: Sneezing, runny nose and eyes, fever

Treatment: Veterinary care, including antibiotics

Transmission: Very contagious to other cats

Ear Mites

Ear mites are tiny parasites that live in the ear canal.

Signs & Symptoms: Itching, scratching, head shaking, dark brown discharge in the ears

Treatment: Veterinary care, including an injection or ear drops

Transmission: Contagious to other cats and dogs, but usually requires direct contact with the infected animal

Ringworm

Ringworm is a fungus related to athlete's foot; it is not actually a worm. Fortunately, ringworm is fairly uncommon.

Signs & Symptoms: Irregularly shaped areas of fur loss; the skin in these areas will usually appear rough and scaly

Treatment: Veterinary care, including an injection and/or topical treatment

Transmission: Very contagious to other cats, dogs, and people, but usually requires direct contact with the infected animal

Fleas

Fleas are tiny insects that feed on the blood of cats, dogs, humans, and other animals. Although each flea only consumes a small drop of blood, fleas usually attack in large numbers. Fleas can be very dangerous to newborn kittens.

Signs & Symptoms: Intense itching and scratching

Treatment: Veterinary care, including an injection and/or topical treatment

Transmission: Very contagious to other cats, dogs, and people

Round, Tape, and Hook Worms

Worms affect a cat's digestive system. They are most commonly seen in kittens and young cats.

Signs & Symptoms: Large belly, an inability to gain weight

Treatment: Veterinary care, including de-worming medication

Transmission: Contagious to other cats and dogs through contact with (and subsequent ingestion of) fecal material

Fading Kitten Syndrome

Once in a while, one or more kittens who were healthy and vigorous at birth will begin to "fade" after several weeks of life. They will stop growing, begin to lose weight, stop nursing, and stop crawling. They may cry continuously and lose the ability to stay upright. The mother cat may push them out of the nest, where they often chill and/or starve to death. Kittens fade very quickly and will not survive 48 hours without veterinary care. Most kittens will not recover without intensive care. There is no clear cause or reason for this condition. It has been linked to birth defects, environmental stress, and infectious disease. Early detection and treatment is imperative, but even with tube feeding, re-hydration, and monitoring, many of these kittens will still die.

Routine Veterinary Care

Many of our rescue partners provide foster kittens with routine veterinary care prior to placement in permanent adoptive homes. The following schedule outlines the various types of routine care that may be provided.

Chapter 5 Newborn Puppies (under 8 weeks)

INTRODUCTION

Newborns, regardless of whether or not they are with their mother, have very little chance of surviving in a shelter environment. Foster homes that foster mother dogs with newborns provide a safe and healthy place for the puppies to grow and learn until they are old enough to be adopted. Foster homes that take care of orphaned newborns provide everything a mother dog would provide. Orphaned puppies require 24-hour supervision and round-the-clock care. Fostering newborns of any kind is sure to be a challenging yet extremely rewarding experience.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

The following is a checklist of items that you will need to foster newborn puppies. *Please check with your rescue partner regarding help with food, Esbilac, or other supplies.*

Checklist:

- Nest box (you could use a crate bottom or a large cardboard box)
- Blankets and/or towels
- Food and water bowls
- High-quality puppy food (it's a good idea to have both dry and canned food on hand in case you have a picky eater)
- Esbilac (puppy milk replacer)
- Heating pad, hot water bottle, or infrared lamp
- Toys
- Scale (although not critical for success, a food or postal scale is very helpful in monitoring small puppies' growth)
- Bottles (for feeding orphaned or rejected puppies)

PREGNANCY, LABOR, AND BIRTH

Pregnancy

During her last week of pregnancy, a mother dog may not have a big appetite because the puppies are crowding her organs. Feed her several small meals daily rather than one or two larger meals. Leave dry dog food and water out at all times. If the mother dog will not eat the food provided, try mixing it with a small amount of meat or other gravy-flavored or moist dog food.

Prepare a nesting box; place it in a dry, warm, relatively dark, draft-free place out of the way. Lead the mother dog to the box. If she does not want to stay in it, do not insist, but encourage her by petting her and giving her little food treats.

If your nursery room is not warm enough, wrap a heating pad in a towel, set it on the lowest setting, and place it under half the box so the mother has room to move away from the heat source if she chooses. You may consider wrapping duct tape around the cord; otherwise, the puppies will be apt to chew on it.

Labor

Before the delivery, the mother dog may become very irritable and restless. She will search for a place to have her puppies. Try to place her in the designated nesting box. She may choose another location to give birth, so it may be helpful to place the box in a room without any hiding places. Let her have the puppies outside of her nest box if she chooses. When delivery is complete, you may then move the mother and the puppies into the box. Some mother dogs may become protective of their new litters. Talk to her in a gentle, calm voice during this time. If she still acts aggressive, make sure the environment is safe and warm for the puppies, and leave her alone until she is less anxious.

Some dogs may want you to stay with them and will follow you if you leave. You will probably have to spend some time soothing this kind of dog. After the birth of the first couple of puppies, she will be very busy and not as

dependent on your presence. Other dogs will try to get away and hide when in labor. Give this kind of dog the space she needs to feel comfortable, but check up on her regularly.

There are three stages of canine labor:

Stage 1: During the first stage, which may take up to 12 hours, the mother may breathe rhythmically. She may become very active, dig at the floor, cry loudly and appear to be straining while defecating.

Stage 2: In the second stage, the water bag breaks and straw-like fluid is passed. Delivery will begin a few minutes later. The mother dog will lick the newborn puppies clean and bite through the umbilical cord. She is bonding with her puppies through this process and learning to recognize them as her own. It is very important that you do not disturb her. It may appear as though she is too rough, but she is actually stimulating breathing and increasing blood circulation in the puppies.

Stage 3: In the final stage, the placenta follows a few minutes after delivery. The mother will probably eat some or all of the placenta.

Birth

Puppies are born anywhere from 15-30 minutes apart, so most deliveries take 2-6 hours. The average litter is 4 to 5 puppies. The mother dog is probably finished giving birth if she seems calm and happy, although there have been some cases in which a dog resumed delivery sometime later. If a puppy is not born within 2 hours and the mother is continually straining or appears to be in distress, you should seek emergency veterinary care as soon as possible.

THE FIRST 8 WEEKS OF LIFE

Week 1

- A nursing mother dog cannot be overfed. Food requirements can increase up to three times the normal amount. Leave food out for the mother dog at ALL times.
- The floor temperature of the nest box should be between 96 and 100 degrees.
- The puppies' ear canals open when they are between 13 and 17 days old.
- The puppies' weight will vary according to their breed but they should be gaining about 1 to 1 1/2 grams per day for each pound of anticipated adult weight. They should be handled as little as possible.
- Puppies will sleep 90% of the time and nurse from their mother the other 10%. They should nurse vigorously and littermates should compete for nipples.
- Puppies can nurse for up to 45 minutes at a time.
- Chilling is the number one danger to newborn puppies, so keep them warm.
- Try to watch the puppies nurse at least once a day. Make sure every puppy is nursing and there is not too much maneuvering for position. A great deal of activity and crying could indicate a problem with milk flow or quality. When the mother dog re-enters the nest box, there should be fussing for only a few minutes before the puppies settle down.

Week 2

- The floor temperature of the nest box should now be 90-95 degrees.
- The puppies should continue to gain about 1 to 1 1/2 grams per day for each pound of anticipated adult weight.
- The puppies' eyes will open when they are between 10 and 14 days old. They open gradually, usually starting from the nose outward.
- All newborn puppies have blue eyes and initially no pupils can be distinguished. The eye color is a solid, dark blue.

Week 3

- The mother dog will begin to spend more time out of the nest.
- The floor temperature of the nest box should now be 85-90 degrees.
- The puppies should continue to gain about 1 to 1 1/2 grams per day for each pound of anticipated adult weight.

- The puppies should now be spending only 60-70 percent of their time sleeping.
 - Puppies generally are able to stand around day 15 and can usually crawl by day 21.
 - The puppies' milk teeth will begin to cut.
 - Puppies will begin to play with each other, learn to sit, and will start trying to touch objects with their paws.
 - During week 3, puppies should begin their socialization phase. Start to increase the amount of handling the puppies receive and try to accustom them to human contact. Avoid exposing them to anything frightening.
- *See notes on socialization.

Week 4

- The floor temperature of the nest box should be 75-80 degrees from this point forward.
 - The puppies should continue to gain about 1 to 1 1/2 grams per day for each pound of anticipated adult weight.
 - Adult eye color will begin to appear, although it may not be final for another 9 to 12 weeks. The puppies will begin to develop complete sound and sight orientation.
 - Puppies will begin to clean themselves, although their mother will continue to do most of the serious cleaning.
 - Puppies can begin to eat from a shallow saucer and should be weaned gradually from their mother's milk. The mother dog will usually begin to discourage her puppies from nursing; however, some dogs (particularly those with smaller litters) will allow nursing until the puppies are around two months old.
- *See notes on weaning.
- Sometimes, nursing activity is done just for comfort. Even if the puppies appear to be nursing, they may not be receiving all the nutrition they need. Make sure they are eating and gaining weight.
 - Puppies will begin eliminating on their own. Supply newspaper or puppy training pads and encourage them to use this area.
- *See notes on house-training.

Week 5

- The puppies should continue to gain about 1 to 1 1/2 grams per day for each pound of anticipated adult weight.
- The male puppies' testicles will become visible.
- The puppies should be very active and be able to get out of the nest.
- Weaning and house-training should continue.

Week 6

- The puppies should continue to gain about 1 to 1 1/2 grams per day for each pound of anticipated adult weight.
- The puppies should have complete visual abilities. They will imitate their mother, play with toys, and explore the world around them.
- Continue the weaning process by thickening the gruel. Begin to introduce solid food.

Week 7

- The puppies should continue to gain about 1 to 1 1/2 grams per day for each pound of anticipated adult weight.
- Nursing sessions should be brief and infrequent, if they take place at all.
- The puppies should now eat undiluted puppy food. Continue to encourage the puppies to eat dry food. Dry food is good for their teeth and will likely be what they are fed in their adoptive homes.

Week 8

- The puppies should continue to gain about 1 to 1 1/2 grams per day for each pound of anticipated adult weight, and be ready to be spayed or neutered.

ORPHANED PUPPIES

Sometimes, newborn puppies are orphaned. Success with raising these newborns is based on following basic procedures and keeping important elements in mind. Successful rearing of orphaned puppies requires providing them with a suitable environment, the correct quantities of nutrients for different stages of growth, and a regular schedule of feeding, sleeping, grooming and exercise.

You must also provide the stimulus for urination and defecation during the first 18-21 days of life. Do this by massaging the abdomen and peri-anal area after each feeding with a cotton ball or very soft washcloth dampened with warm water (you don't want to irritate the area). You can also use mineral oil on a cotton ball to stimulate the bowels. Puppies, after 4 weeks of age, can usually eliminate without assistance.

You must also maintain their body warmth for them, as puppies do not have the ability to regulate and control their body temperature. Keep them out of drafts. If necessary, use a 250-watt infrared heat bulb suspended above the crate. If you need to use a heating pad, place it in front of their sleeping area, at the opening of the crate, and cover it with several layers of towels.

Puppy bedding must be changed daily, and sometimes more often. Wash dirty bedding with a little bleach to disinfect it.

Puppies need exercise to promote muscular and circulatory development. However, care should be taken in the first two weeks of life because their internal organs and limbs are extremely fragile. Play with and handle them prior to feeding. At least twice a week, and more often if possible, the babies need to be groomed with a soft, warm, moist cloth wiped gently, imitating the mother's grooming licks.

Cow's milk is not nutritious enough for puppies; they will slowly starve to death on it. Purchase Esbilac from a veterinary clinic or pet supply store for feedings.

Test the temperature of the Esbilac before feeding. It should be warm, but not hot: around 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Don't boil the Esbilac, since it will destroy the nutritional value. To warm the Esbilac, place the bottle in hot water for a few minutes or put it in the microwave for no more than 10 seconds.

If constipation occurs, add 1 drop of vegetable oil to each puppy's food no more than once daily until the problem eases. Overfeeding can cause diarrhea and a host of other problems.

Hand-feeding can be challenging and yet very rewarding. Everyone who has done this has developed a method that works best for them; you will, too. Whether you use a baby animal bottle or a syringe, it's best to keep the puppy in a position similar to what she would experience if mama were there. In other words, don't turn the baby on her back. Keep the bottle at a 45-degree angle to reduce the amount of air getting into the puppy's stomach.

Puppy Feeding

Feeding equipment needs to be sterilized before and between feedings. Do this by dipping the equipment in boiling water. Sterilize your hands before and after feedings. Below are general guidelines for how much to feed and when:

Week of life	Amount	Frequency
1st week	60 ml per pound	4 times a day
2nd week	70 ml per pound	3 times a day
3rd week	80 ml per pound	3 times a day
4th week	90 ml per pound	3 times a day

As long as the puppy does not cry excessively, gains weight, and feels firm to the touch, the diet is meeting his nutritional needs.

After each feeding session, you should give each puppy a full-body once over with a barely damp washcloth, using short strokes like mom would use. This keeps their fur clean, teaches them how to groom, and gives them the attention and mothering that they crave.

NOTES: Here is some additional information on techniques for socialization, weaning, and house-training.

Socialization

It is your job to help convince the puppies that humans are kind and loving. Some puppies will adjust to you and their new environment quickly, while others may seem frightened and intimidated. To help the puppies get used to you, try sitting down in the middle of their room while making phone calls. They will hear the sound of your voice, but not be threatened by it. Familiarize them with the sound of the television and radio.

When the puppies are nearly four weeks old, they are ready to socialize with you and each other. Try to play with your puppies daily. The outgoing and friendly puppies will be easy to play with; however, some will need a little encouragement. If your puppies are afraid and run away when you approach, try sitting or lying on the floor near them and letting them come to you. When you pick a puppy up, stroke the puppy gently and speak to him in a soft tone. You want this to be a pleasant experience, so put the puppy down if he begins squirming a lot. With patience and love, most puppies will come to tolerate and even enjoy the company of humans.

Weaning

At about 4 weeks of age, the puppies will probably start showing interest in their mom's food. Introduce the puppies to solid food by offering warmed canned food mixed into a thin gruel with a little bit of water or Esbilac. Place the food in a shallow saucer. Some puppies will begin lapping right away, while others will prefer to lick the gruel from your fingers. Allow them to do so and slowly lower your finger to the saucer. The puppies may bite the edge of the plate or walk in the food. Sometimes it takes two or three meals or more before they really catch on. If a puppy doesn't seem interested in the gruel at all, try gently opening the puppy's mouth and rubbing a little of the food on her tongue or teeth. Be patient; the weaning process takes time. As the puppies catch on, begin to thicken the gruel in the proceeding weeks. Remember that as you thicken the gruel, you will need to make sure the puppies always have access to fresh water in a low, spill-resistant bowl.

By about 6 weeks of age, the puppies should be getting most of their nutrition from the food you are providing. The puppies should be fed at least 3 meals a day. Their stomachs are small and so they may not eat much at a single sitting. To receive adequate nutrition, the puppies require small, frequent feedings. Gradually introduce the puppies to dry food by mixing it in with their gruel. By the end of 8 weeks, the puppies should be content to eat dry food alone. Do not give the puppies cow's milk or other human foods. Dogs and puppies have different nutritional needs than humans and can become ill when given some human foods.

House-training

When the puppies reach about 4 weeks of age, they will begin to eliminate on their own. You can create an elimination area with newspapers or puppy training pads. You can encourage the puppies by showing them the newspaper or pads several times a day, especially after meals and naps. Gently put the puppy on the pad and praise him if he uses the spot to eliminate. It is, of course, common for young puppies to make mistakes. If you find that a puppy has defecated outside of the newspaper or pad area, pick up the puppy, take him to the appropriate area, and set him down. This should help remind the puppies where they are supposed to eliminate. It is a good idea to confine the puppies to a relatively small area because they may forget where the elimination area is located if they have too much room. Be sure to always keep the area clean and away from their food.

HEALTH ISSUES

Because most foster puppies are rescued from shelter environments, it is very difficult for our rescue partners to ensure that they will always be healthy. A puppy that appears healthy at the time of rescue could easily begin to show signs of illness several days later. For this reason, it is very important that foster homes keep their own dogs up to date on vaccinations.

It is also important that foster homes keep their newborn puppies physically separated from their personal dogs for the duration of the puppies' stay. Newborn puppies are extremely vulnerable to illness. While your personal dogs may be vaccinated and thereby protected from various illnesses, your dogs can still carry and transmit illnesses they have been exposed to.

Common Illnesses in Newborn Puppies

The following information is intended to help you better understand and recognize some of the more common illnesses in puppies.

Canine Distemper

Canine distemper is a viral disease that is often fatal. Distemper is most commonly seen in puppies 3-6 months old. Early signs resemble a severe cold. The vaccine for canine distemper is considered very effective.

Signs & Symptoms: Eye congestion and discharge, loss of appetite, vomiting, weight loss, nasal discharge, and diarrhea

Treatment: Veterinary care, including fluid therapy and antibiotics

Transmission: Very contagious

Parvovirus

Parvo is a disease that is most common in puppies and young dogs. It causes the sloughing of the lining of the intestinal tract. Parvovirus can survive in the environment for six months or longer. This means that other unvaccinated dogs can become infected with parvo simply by coming into contact with places where an infected dog has been. A bleach solution is the best way to disinfect areas that may have been contaminated. The vaccine for parvovirus is considered very effective.

Signs & Symptoms: Lethargy, loss of appetite, vomiting, and diarrhea (usually bloody)

Treatment: Veterinary care, including fluid therapy and antibiotics

Transmission: Very contagious to other dogs, especially through contact with infected feces or vomit

Kennel Cough

Kennel cough is a respiratory tract infection that has been linked to several different viral and bacterial causes. Coughing is usually stimulated by physical exertion or by touching the throat area. Kennel cough is self-limiting, usually lasting 1-3 weeks. Antibiotics are often given to prevent secondary infections. Kennel cough is very common in shelters and other boarding facilities. There is a vaccine for bordetella, one of the main agents responsible for causing kennel cough.

Signs & Symptoms: Cough, runny nose and eyes

Treatment: Veterinary care, including antibiotics and cough suppressants

Transmission: Very contagious to other dogs

Ear Mites

Ear mites are tiny parasites that live in the ear canal.

Signs & Symptoms: Itching, scratching, head shaking, dark brown discharge in the ears

Treatment: Veterinary care, including an injection or ear drops

Transmission: Contagious to other dogs and cats, but usually requires direct contact with the infected animal

Ringworm

Ringworm is a fungus related to athletes' foot; it's not actually a worm.

Signs & Symptoms: Irregularly shaped areas of fur loss; the skin of the areas will usually appear rough and scaly

Treatment: Veterinary care, including an injection and/or topical treatment

Transmission: Very contagious to other dogs, cats and people, but usually requires direct contact with the infected animal

Fleas

Fleas are tiny insects that feed on the blood of dogs, cats, humans and other animals. Although each flea only consumes a small drop of blood, fleas usually attack in large numbers.

Signs & Symptoms: Intense itching and scratching

Treatment: Veterinary care, including an injection and/or topical treatment

Transmission: Very contagious to other dogs, cats and people

Round, Tape, and Hook Worms

Worms affect a dog's digestive system. They are most commonly seen in puppies and young dogs.

Signs & Symptoms: Large belly, diarrhea, inability to gain weight

Treatment: Veterinary care, including de-worming medication

Transmission: Contagious to other dogs and cats, but only through contact with (and subsequent ingestion of) feces

Cleaning Procedures

It is important that all items and areas used by a sick foster animal be cleaned thoroughly. You can use a 10% bleach solution to reliably kill most viruses and bacteria. Items to be cleaned should be thoroughly wetted with the bleach solution and allowed to stand for several minutes before rinsing. Foster homes that have recently fostered a dog or puppy with parvo or another extremely contagious disease may be asked to wait several months before fostering another unvaccinated dog or puppy.

Routine Veterinary Care

Each rescue partner will provide foster dogs with routine veterinary care prior to placement in permanent adoptive homes. The following schedule outlines the various types of routine care provided. Again, *this will vary with each group*, so please consult their individual guidelines.

Chapter 6 Emergency Info

What constitutes an emergency? An emergency is any situation in which a foster animal's life is in danger. The following are specific examples of emergency situations.

- Illness – If your foster animal becomes severely ill, please contact your rescue partner as soon as possible. Indications of severe illness include lethargy, severe vomiting and/or diarrhea, or signs that an animal is in pain.
- Trauma – If your foster animal sustains any kind of traumatic injury, please contact your rescue partner as soon as possible. If the injuries are severe, please take the foster animal immediately to the nearest veterinarian.
- Loss – If your foster animal becomes lost, please contact your rescue partner as soon as possible. They will help you contact local animal control facilities.