

Raising Neonatal Puppies Birth Thru 4 Weeks of Age

While raising puppies is fun and incredibly rewarding it also requires some hard work and close monitoring. Puppies at this age are very delicate and require around the clock feeding and care, much like a human baby. Puppies at this age are susceptible to what we refer to as fading puppy syndrome (hypothermia and hypoglycemia) and even the slightest illness can cause death. Being hypervigilant is important. Even the slightest sign of illness can quickly become life-threatening.

Supplies List for Neonatal Care

- Esbilac or GNC formula (preferred brands)
- Heating pad, no auto-shut off
- Baby wipes
- Puppy pads
- Towels/ blankets
- Gram scale
- Human baby bottles, slow-flow
- Stuffed animal for cuddling

0-2 Week Care

Puppies are kept on a heating source at all times (heating pad on low).

Pups are fed at least every 2 hours during the day and every 3 hours at night. Even if sleeping, when the 3 hour time period comes up, please wake and feed them. Formula should be made at a 1:2 ratio regardless of the recommendation. Formula should be warm but not hot. An average puppy at this age eats 0.5oz to 2 oz per feeding or 1cc per ounce of weight, depending on breed and size of puppies.

Puppies this young and up until their eyes open do require stimulation to go potty after each feeding. A warm cotton ball or baby wipe is used to rub their privates and cause them to urinate and defecate.

Weigh puppies once daily and chart to accurately assess growth. If losing weight contact fostermedical@sanantoniopetsalive.org. Avoid bathing. If you feel your puppy needs to be bathed please contact fostermedical@sanantoniopetsalive.org

The following should be considered emergencies:

- Cold to the touch
- Very watery or explosive diarrhea
- Not eating, even missing one meal
- Lethargic or unresponsive
- Struggling to breathe

2-4 Week Care

Eyes are opening now and puppies are beginning to try to stand up and move around some. Heat should be provided but they should be able to move away if needed.

Puppies continue to eat at least every 3 hours, but at 3-4 weeks old can go to every 4 hours and by 4 weeks old can make it 4-6 hours overnight without a bottle. An average puppy at this age eats 2-4 oz per feeding or 1cc per ounce of weight.

At this age the pups can urinate and defecate on their own.

Weigh once daily and chart to assess growth.

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. Because puppies will go downhill very quickly, often within 24hrs, it is best to weigh each puppy daily, regardless of outward, visible health.

The following should be considered emergencies:

- White or grey gums
- Cold to the touch
- Very watery or explosive diarrhea
- Not eating, even missing one meal
- Lethargic or unresponsive
- Struggling to breathe

For all puppies in the age group

- Avoid too many guests. Minimizing exposure will help keep the puppies healthy.
- Puppies should be kept indoors.
- Avoid bathing, especially at 0-2 weeks. Once puppies are 3 weeks they can be bathed to be kept clean but should be blow dried and fed immediately after.

Troubleshooting

In office use below line

Technicians:

Weight and Food Tracking

Puppies Birth to 4 weeks

Puppies name: _____

Age: _____

Date	AM/PM	Type of food eating	Weight

In office use below line

Technicians:

- _____ Appetite vs no appetite, meatball test
- _____ Parvo - signs
- _____ Hypoglycemia - eating every 3-4 hrs, wobbliness
- _____ Losing weight
- _____ Lethargy vs normal puppy

SAPA! Fading Puppy Protocol

Fading Puppy Syndrome is a life-threatening emergency in which a puppy “crashes” and begins to fade away. **If not dealt with immediately it can result in death.** If you are fostering puppies 6 weeks or younger, it is a very good idea to familiarize yourself with this handout so you know what to do if it happens.

Symptoms

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

When this happens, it is vital that you take these immediate steps!

FPS is caused by 2 things : Hypothermia (being too cold) and Hypoglycemia (not enough blood sugar). You must combat both of these things or the puppy will die.

Treatment

Step 1- Get them warm

Create the “burrito” towel. Immediately wrap the puppy up in a towel like a burrito leaving their face exposed only. Their whole body, tail, ears, and paws should be in the towel, only nose and mouth exposed. *Do not take the puppy out of the towel to adjust them, check on them, etc. - this is very important!* Every time you take them out you will make them cold again, even if it is only for a second.

You must apply an extra source of heat (listed below). The puppy's body can't warm itself up with just a towel alone, you have to apply extra heat. Also, your body temperature is much lower than what a puppy should be, so trying to warm them up with your body heat won't work either.

If you have a heating pad - Then wrap a heating pad *turned onto low* around the towel - duct tape it or secure it around the towel so it stays wrapped around them. Don't let the heating pad touch them directly, it can cause burns, make sure the 'burrito' towel is between their skin and the heating pad.

If you don't have a heating pad - you can either

- A. Keep your dryer running full of towels. Grab a new hot one every 5 minutes and wrap this new hot towel around the “burrito” towel. After 5 minutes, trade that towel out for a new hot one. Don't remove the “burrito” towel.
- B. Fill 2 socks full of rice, tie the ends of them so it doesn't spill out. Throw them in the microwave for 3 minutes. Keep them next to the puppy on the outside of the burrito towel. Every 30 minutes reheat one sock and leave the other next to the puppy so she doesn't cool off.

Step 2- Get their blood sugar up

Once you get the heat on them, get a bowl or Tupperware and a few tablespoons of sugar in some hot water. Stir it up so you get a sugar water solution - you don't want it super syrupy like pancake syrup, but you do want it to be as strong as possible while still pretty runny. Undiluted honey, karo syrup, agave nectar can be substituted. Using a syringe or your finger give 3 drops every 3 minutes into the mouth. If they aren't swallowing, try not to get it down the throat, try to get it on the tongue or gums. Set an egg timer or use the stopwatch on your cell phone to make sure you are doing it at least every 3 minutes. Every 5 minutes or 10 minutes will not work, it must be every 3 minutes.

Step 3 – Email fostermedical@sanantoniopetsalive.org and appointment@sanantoniopetsalive.org

Don't leave your puppy to email or forget to do your sugar every 3 minutes. They won't have any extra advice for you that isn't in this handout, but they will need to be made aware of what is going on. Starting on an antibiotic is usually necessary as even subtle changes in gut bacteria can cause FPS.

Prognosis

We generally have very good success with these puppies if you follow the above steps. We DO NOT recommend you rush them to the vet for many reasons:

You have the motivation to sit right there with them and make them your top priority. A vet clinic has many patients it is helping and can't give your puppy the 100% undivided attention you can give them.

Your puppy will continue to be cold/hypoglycemic on the way to the vet, in the waiting room, in the hospital while they try to determine what is wrong, etc. Most puppies won't last long enough for them to start the treatments there.

Dr. Jefferson came up with these protocols based on what would be done if she saw these patients in her clinic. Most clinics would do the same thing - try to keep them warm and get their blood sugar up. We did a test-trial period a few years ago of having all of the fading puppy syndrome seen by Dr. Jefferson or a technician to try other treatments, and we had a much higher failure rate (it was close to 100% failure) than if the foster did it themselves at home. This was because the puppies were not made to withstand travel and the clinic staff cannot devote 100% of their time to them (but a foster can).

Keep in mind, it can sometimes take hours for them to come out of it and start acting normally again. Once they do come out of it, make sure you contact our medical foster support person and our medical clinic (fostermedical@sanantoniopetsalive.org and appointment@sanantoniopetsalive.org) to discuss what could have possibly caused them to fade in the first place and make sure we have the puppy on all the right medical treatments for any illnesses they have that may have caused it. An exam may be necessary.

Also keep in mind, even with all the love and attention and perfect treatment of this condition, some of them still won't make it. Try not to blame yourself during this difficult time. Remember, if it wasn't for you, every puppy you've ever fostered would have been killed at another shelter and never given a chance at life.