



GULF COAST
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Orphaned Puppy Foster Manual

Neonatal Period (Birth–2 Weeks)

During the neonatal phase, puppies are entirely dependent on you for warmth, food, hygiene, and comfort. They are born blind, deaf, and unable to regulate their body temperature or eliminate waste on their own.

Supplies Provided

- Bottle
- Syringes (5cc, 10cc, 20cc)
- Karo syrup
- Miracle nipple
- Dawn Dish Soap (as needed)
- Esbilac Puppy Milk Replacement
- Blankets and Towels
- Baby Wipes
- Heating Pad
- Top-latch Carrier
- Stuffed Animal

Set-Up

Use a crate with a top latch to ensure easy access while keeping puppies contained. Place a heating pad on the bottom of the crate and cover it with a soft blanket. The room should be quiet, free from drafts, and ideally between 80–85°F.

Routine

Newborn puppies should be fed every 2–4 hours, including overnight. Each feeding session also includes stimulating for elimination, burping, and gentle cleaning. Replace bedding daily or more often, if soiled. Wipe down soiled areas as needed.

- **Weighing**
Puppies should be weighed *in grams* at least once daily **before** feeding. Record each weight using the provided reported chart to monitor healthy growth. Any weight loss or failure to gain weight should be reported to the foster coordinator immediately.
- **Feeding**
Bottle-feed with warmed formula suitable for puppies (we use Esbilac Puppy Milk Replacement). Check the temperature by dropping a small amount of formula on your wrist to ensure it is body temperature and ensure the nipple is dispensing formula at a slow, steady pace. Puppies should never be fed on their back—always on their stomachs slightly upright to avoid aspiration. DO NOT squeeze the bottle. Use the feeding chart as a guide to help determine feeding amounts.



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- If your foster puppy is not latching onto the bottle, they may need to be syringe-fed by placing small drops of formula on their tongue. This should be done carefully to avoid the risk of aspiration, which can cause choking or pneumonia. When syringe feeding, use a small syringe (1cc or 3 cc) to better control the flow. Gently drip the formula onto the side of the puppy's tongue or just inside the mouth, never directly down the throat, and go slowly, allowing the puppy to swallow between drops. It's important to watch closely for any signs of distress or choking and stop feeding immediately if these occur. Following these precautions will help ensure the puppy stays safe while receiving the nutrition they need.
- **Burping**
After feeding, hold the puppy upright against your shoulder or chest and gently pat their back until a small burp is released.
- **Stimulation**
Using a soft, warm, damp cloth, gently rub the genital and anal area after each feeding to stimulate urination and defecation. This mimics the natural actions of a mother dog.
- **Cleaning**
Wipe any excess food, urine, or feces from the puppy.
- **Sleep**
Between meals, newborn puppies will spend the rest of their time sleeping. They should be kept in a dark or dim environment, away from noise and excessive handling during this stage. At this age, puppies spend about 22 hours a day sleeping.

Veterinary Care

- **Vaccines:** Puppies will have received their first Distemper/Parvo vaccine at intake and will continue every 2 weeks.
- **Deworming:** Begins at 2 weeks and continues as recommended.
- **Stool Sample:** Please bring a stool sample to your second appointment or sooner if possible.
- **Outdoor Restrictions:** Puppies should remain indoors and only leave the home when placed in a secure carrier for veterinary visits.



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Transitional and Early Socialization Period (2-4 Weeks)

Supplies Provided

- Bottle
- Syringes (1cc, 3cc, 5cc, 10cc, 20cc)
- Karo syrup
- Miracle nipple
- Dawn Dish Soap (as needed)
- Esbilac Puppy Milk Replacement
- Blankets and Towels
- Baby Wipes
- Heating Pad
- Stuffed Animal
- Puppy Dry Food
- Puppy Wet Food (when available)
- Shallow Bowl
- Enzymatic Spray
- Paper Towels
- Pee Pads
- Toys
- Small carrier
- Baby gate (as needed)
- X-Pen (as needed)
- Large Crate (as needed)

Set-Up

This stage marks the beginning of developmental changes. Puppies start to open their eyes and ears and become more mobile. Give them more space, by upgrading to a large crate, soft play pen, or an x-pen lined with pee pads, blankets, and small toys. Adding a variety of textures can help them develop into confident puppies!

Routine

At around 3 weeks old, puppies can be introduced to gruel, also known as “mush”. First, they can be offered warm formula in a shallow dish. Gradually, you can add small amounts of canned puppy food (or dry food soaked/blended with warm water).

Offer in a shallow dish 2-3 times per day while continuing to bottle feed throughout the rest of the day. Reduce bottle feedings gradually as they begin to consume more on their own.

- Puppies who were not bottle fed can alternatively be fed gruel 5 times a day (rather than teaching them how to use the bottle and eat the gruel at the same time).



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Veterinary Care

- **Vaccines:** Continue the Distemper/Parvo vaccinations along with a Bordetella vaccination, which can be given at 3 weeks.
- **Deworming** as needed
- **Microchip**
- **Outdoor Restrictions:** Puppies should continue to remain indoors and only leave the home when placed in a secure carrier for veterinary visits.



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Socialization Period (4-12 Weeks)

Set-Up

Puppies should spend most of their time in an x-pen or small room with individual crates for feeding/sleeping. Supervised playtime in other parts of the house is encouraged!

Supplies Provided

- Blankets and Towels
- Baby Wipes
- Stuffed Animal
- Puppy Dry Food
- Puppy Wet Food (when available)
- Bowls (for food and water)
- Enzymatic Spray
- Paper Towels
- Pee Pads
- Toys
- Small carrier
- Baby gate (as needed)
- X-Pen (as needed)
- Large Crate (as needed)
- Dawn Dish Soap (as needed)

Routine

- **Feeding:** At 5 weeks, puppies should begin being offered softened (not mashed) kibble 4 times a day. By 6 weeks, puppies should be fed separately in their own crate to prevent resource guarding. Gradually decrease the soak time and water amount until they are eating 3 meals of fully dry kibble by 8 weeks.
- **Teething:** Their teeth will continue to grow and evolve until they are about 7 months old. Ensure they have plenty of chew toys to help ease the discomfort and to give them something to do.
- **Potty Training:** Begin placing puppies on pee pads immediately after feeding or waking. Use verbal cues like "go potty" and praise when they eliminate on the pad. Keep pads in the same location to build routine. Be patient—accidents will happen. Clean messes promptly and avoid harsh scolding.
- **Socialization:**
 - Quietly play "Puppy Socialization Noises" from YouTube to expose your puppy to different unfamiliar sounds such as fireworks, animal noises, traffic, clapping, etc.
 - Invite friends and family members to meet the puppy (one at a time) and monitor for any signs of discomfort. Try to introduce them to a variety of people of different sexes, ethnicities, ages, and sizes.
 - Expose the animals to different household items and textures. See the puppy socialization list for ideas.
 - Keep all exposures to new people and items positive!



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- **Crate Training:** Begin by feeding the puppies in their crates for positive association. At first, keep crate times short and offer plenty of potty breaks to avoid accidents. At 8 weeks, you want to begin teaching them to sleep in the crate overnight. Give them a stuffed animal for comfort and play quiet, soothing music. Be prepared to wake up overnight for potty breaks.

Veterinary Care

- **Vaccines:** Continue the Distemper/Parvo vaccinations until **16 weeks old**.
- **Deworming:** as needed
- **Heartworm Prevention:** monthly starting at 2 pounds
- **Flea and Tick Prevention:** monthly starting at 6 weeks
- **Outdoor Restrictions:** Puppies should continue to remain indoors and only leave the home when placed in a secure carrier for veterinary visits. At 8 weeks, they can begin to be let into fully fenced private yards for short, supervised potty breaks.

Travel

Please do not transport your foster puppy in the bed of a pickup truck. Please ensure they are secured inside the vehicle in a crate. Keep windows rolled up or cracked no more than an inch. **Never leave a dog alone in a parked car—even for a few minutes.**

Medication Adherence

Administer all prescribed medications exactly as directed by the shelter veterinarian. Do not discontinue or adjust medications without consulting the Foster Coordinator or Clinic Manager.



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Category	Specific Exposure or Activity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Handling & Physical Touch	Handled by at least 3 different people	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Touched on ears (like vet exam)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Touched on paws (like nail trim)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Touched inside mouth (mimic dental check)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Touched tail and belly	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gently picked up and carried	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Held in towel (simulating grooming or drying)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Restrained gently for 5–10 seconds	<input type="checkbox"/>
Puppy Interaction	Playtime with littermate	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Interaction with fully vaccinated adult dogs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Socialization	Met adult male	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Met adult female	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Met someone in a hat/sunglasses	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Met someone with a cane or walker	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Met a child (under supervision)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Heard different voices (deep, high-pitched, loud, quiet)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Met people of different ethnicities	



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Sounds & Noises	Heard vacuum cleaner	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Heard dishwasher or laundry machines	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Heard doorbell or knocking	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Heard thunderstorms or rain (recordings OK)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Heard fireworks or city noise (low volume)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Heard baby crying or kids playing (recording or real)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Surfaces & Textures	Explored metal surface (like vet scale or tray)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Walked on tile/linoleum	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Walked on carpet	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climbed over or under objects (pillow, broomstick, low box)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Novel Objects	Investigated a closed umbrella	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Saw a vacuum or broom in motion	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Saw rolling wheels (stroller, skateboard, shopping cart)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Sniffed a backpack or purse	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Heard jingling keys and saw them dropped	<input type="checkbox"/>



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Life Skills & Handling	Wore light collar or harness briefly	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Introduced to crate with positive reinforcement	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Practiced being alone for 1–5 minutes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Experienced light brushing	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Towel dry after play or bath	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Touched paws with clippers nearby (no clipping yet)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Soft bath	<input type="checkbox"/>
Food & Play	Took treats from hand	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Ate kibble from snuffle mat or puzzle toy	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Introduced to at least 3 textures of toys	<input type="checkbox"/>



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Puppy Bottle Feeding and Stomach Capacity Chart

Puppy Weight (lbs, oz)	Puppy Weight (grams)	Daily Caloric Requirement*	Amount of Formula Per Day (ml)**	Amount Per Feeding (ml)*	Approximate Number of Feedings Per Day***
2 oz	57 g	11 kcal	13 ml	2 ml	6
4 oz	113 g	23 kcal	25 ml	5 ml	6
6 oz	170 g	34 kcal	38 ml	7 ml	6
8 oz	227 g	45 kcal	50 ml	9 ml	6
10 oz	284 g	57 kcal	63 ml	11 ml	6
12 oz	340 g	68 kcal	76 ml	14 ml	6
14 oz	397 g	79 kcal	88 ml	16 ml	6
16 oz (1 lb)	454 g	91 kcal	101 ml	18 ml	6
2 lb	907 g	181 kcal	202 ml	36 ml	6
3 lb	1,361 g	272 kcal	302 ml	54 ml	6
4 lb	1,814 g	363 kcal	403 ml	73 ml	6
5 lb	2,268 g	454 kcal	504 ml	91 ml	6
6 lb	2,722 g	544 kcal	605 ml	109 ml	6
7 lb	3,175 g	635 kcal	706 ml	127 ml	6
8 lb	3,629 g	726 kcal	806 ml	145 ml	6

* The daily caloric requirement was calculated using 20 kcal/100 g body weight and the amount per feeding using 4 ml/100 g body weight. The energy requirement is ~20-26 kcal/100g body weight daily and the maximum comfortable stomach capacity is ~4 ml/100 g body weight.¹

** Concentration 0.9 kcal/ml. Most commercial puppy milk replacers in the US provide less than 1 kcal/ml, acting to increase the volume of milk required to meet caloric needs. This can be problematic in terms of the number and size of feedings given relative to stomach capacity and more likely to result in gastrointestinal disturbances. This may also account for why bottle fed puppies grow slower than puppies that nurse off a mother.

*** As the puppy is adjusting well to the milk and the feeding volume, you may be able to increase the volume fed to help reduce the number of feedings per day. Be aware that exceeding the stomach capacity (amount per feeding) may put the puppy at risk of aspiration, vomiting, diarrhea, and gas build-up in the stomach and intestines.

Puppies at that are between 3 ½ -5 weeks of age are usually eating some solid food, decreasing the amount of milk replacer required to meet daily caloric requirements. This may result in less frequent milk feedings.

¹ Lawler, D. F. "Neonatal and pediatric care of the puppy and kitten." *Theriogenology*, vol. 70, no.3, 2008, pp. 384-392.



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