

## Managing The Newborn Puppy

- The mortality rate in litters of all breeds in general is 10 – 20%. This is the case even in well-managed, well-supervised whelpings. This is very high.
- In almost any breed 1 or 2 pups are lost around the time of birth and during the first week.
- It is unusual to lose an entire litter.
- When caesarean surgery looks imminent it is best done early. Late caesareans often have poor results.
- **The puppies must be kept at a temperature of 28 – 30 degrees Celcius. A cardboard box and a hot-water bottle or pad is best. This enables the bitch and the puppies to adjust their own temperatures. A heat lamp removes that choice.**
- The body temperature in a normal puppy is 36 – 37 degrees Celcius. The bitch's temperature is around 38.0 degrees Celcius.
- The normal heart rate in the puppy is 200 – 250/minute.
- A newborn puppy should have a good coat covering, no discharges from any of the orifices, and a well-rounded soft belly. Always check for cleft palates and patent anuses (bums) as soon as you can.
- Hypothermia is a common cause of complications in the puppy. A puppy is hypothermic when the temperature is:

At birth <34 degrees Celcius

Day 1 – 3 <35.5 degrees Celcius

One week <37 degrees Celcius

The symptoms of hypothermia:

The puppy feels cold

The puppy moves less

The puppy may be noisy

The puppy may be very quiet

The membranes (mouth) appear dark red.

What do you do?

Because hypothermia reduces the gut movement, it is important that the puppy's temperature is returned to normal before attempting to feed. Never feed a cold puppy.

When warming up a puppy do it no faster than 2 degrees Celcius every 10 minutes. The best way to do this is to place the puppy under your clothes next to your skin.

Do not place the hypothermic puppy on a hotwater bottle. If you have to use one, it must be a 'cool' hotwater bottle. That is, just a little warmer than the puppy itself.

Do not use heating lamps.

Too rapid warming is dangerous to a cold puppy.

#### Puppy infections and immunity

- 90% of the puppy's immunity comes from the colostrum. For this reason it is crucial that the bitch's vaccinations are up to date. The colostrum provides the puppy with passive immunity.
- The gut will absorb colostrum only in the first 8 – 12 hours. Any colostrum fed after that is pointless.
- The passive immunity in the puppy lasts for 6 – 16 weeks.
- If the bitch dies, or cannot feed the puppies, a good source of passive immunity is serum drawn from any other dog in the household. This can be fed to the puppy.

#### Fading Puppy Syndrome

- Can happen anytime up to 14 days of age.
- The causes are complex and multifactorial (genetic, anatomical, infectious, etc.)
- Any attempt to treat must be immediate:

**Get the puppies' temperature to what it should be (see above).**

Administer fluids, not the bitch's milk or milk substitute. Drip fluid or Normal Saline is best. The static or slow gut cannot process milk, but can absorb fluids. The most common cause of death is dehydration.

**Treat the whole litter with antibiotics.**

Remove the fading puppy from the litter.

**The fluid requirement of a puppy is 13 – 22 ml/100g puppy weight/day**

- A quiet puppy is either well-fed or ill.
- A hungry puppy is noisy.
- A starving/hypoglycaemic puppy is very quiet or appears dead.
- A newborn puppy has stored energy reserves sufficient for 24 hours. It is not, therefore, a matter of life or death if the puppy does not suckle in the first 24 hours.
- **Normal puppies feed every 2 – 4 hours and will suckle for 10 - 15 minutes at a time.**

- Puppies sleep between feeds.
- Regularly check that the bellies are soft and round.
- Place a poor suckler onto a teat that has just been stimulated by a stronger puppy.