



A Discussion About Feeding Orphan Puppies and Kittens

Feeding orphan puppies and kittens is a very big job, but it can be done nicely if your commitment is great enough.

One of the first rules of thumb is that a crying puppy (or kitten) is either hungry and/or cold. Most puppies that are hungry can quickly be coaxed into nursing from a bottle if the milk is at body temperature, and if the nipple is not too large. A regular baby's nipple is just too large for newborn pups of any breed. Most puppies can nurse from a larger nipple after the third week, but not before. It is best to get a puppy nurser bottle (available at most veterinary offices and pet shops) or "Preemie" nipples (for human babies) from drugstores. Very often many of these nipples need the opening enlarged with a hot pin so that the formula can flow out readily.

When the bottle of formula is turned upside down, a drop of milk should form from gravity pressure alone (without the aid of any sucking pressure). This will allow the puppy or kitten to nurse without having to work too hard.

The babies should be allowed to nurse until they are full. After they lose interest in further nursing, they should have their bellies rubbed with a warm, damp terry cloth. This stimulates them to urinate and have a bowel movement. They will not be able to do this for themselves until they are nearly three weeks of age, and they can die if this part of the routine is neglected entirely.

The feeding schedule has to be once EVERY TWO HOURS, around the clock (this means the middle of the night too), from birth until the end of the second week. If they are not hungry, they simply will not have any interest in nursing, but still the offer should be made every two hours. At the end of the second week, the middle of the night feedings can be reduced to one feeding at say 2:00 or 3:00 O'clock. To make the one feeding at night work, they have to be fed just before bedtime, and first thing in the morning. On the second or third day into the third week, the feeding schedule can be changed from every two hours to every three hours, and the first attempts at pan feeding can be made.

The best food for pan feeding is to use canned milk mixed half and half with water to make a milk substitute, which is then poured over high quality puppy chow in sufficient quantity to make a mushy gruel. This has to be prepared fresh each feeding, because it spoils very rapidly. At first this gruel is offered just once or twice daily. As the puppies get better at pan feeding, the frequency of pan feeding should be increased steadily until they are fed in this manner five or six times daily. As they eat more solid food, their interest in nursing will diminish. The dietary needs supplied from nursing can be reduced to zero by five weeks of age.

They will be very messy eaters during the early pan feedings, so they should be bathed often. During the fifth week, dry puppy food should be made available at all times, for free choice feeding. Most puppies can eat an all-dry diet by the time they are six and a half to seven weeks of age. It takes this long for their jaw muscles and teeth to get strong enough to readily crunch up the dry food. If they eat dry food handily at an earlier age, the gruel can be eliminated at that point in time.

A discussion about feeding orphan puppies and kittens (continued) Do not ever use milk (cow's milk) to feed a puppy or kitten. The lactose in cow's milk usually causes a very nasty diarrhea. It doesn't matter if the cow's milk is powdered, 1/2%, 2%, or 4% just don't use it. Use only a commercially prepared formula for nursing. All animal hospitals and some pet shops stock this formula. In an emergency, canned milk mixed half and half with water can be used as formula, but only for 12 to 24 hours. During this time, commercial formula should be obtained and used. Do not attempt to use home made formulas (especially those that call for honey in the recipe). Almost all of these are not nutritious, to say the least, some are downright dangerous, and in the long run, you will not save any money.

As always, the last bit of advice is to call for instructions if you are in doubt about anything concerned with this project.