

## **Newborn Puppy and Kitten Information**

Congratulations on your new little ones. Please read this information to help keep your newborns healthy.

**Temperature:** Newborn puppies' and kittens' first few weeks of life are very delicate. Their body temperatures vary with the environment making them susceptible to being too hot or cold. Their surrounding or environmental temperature should be between 80 and 85 degrees Fahrenheit and draft free. The first week of life, their body temperatures should range between 95 to 98 degrees Fahrenheit. The second and third weeks, they range from 97 to 100 degrees F and after that they should be 100-102 degrees F. If they are cold, they will be unable to digest their food or nurse and their heart rate will become very slow. Usually their mother will keep them warm, but if not, we recommend keeping them in a large box with towels they can easily crawl in or out of. You can use a heating lamp if it is placed in one area of the box and the puppies or kittens can crawl away from the lighted area if they are too warm.

**Feeding:** The first week of life, puppies and kittens need to eat every 1 to 2 hours. After that, the rule of thumb is each week of age equals how many hours apart the feedings are: 2 weeks old, feed every 2 hours; 3 weeks old, every 3 hours, etc. Usually the mother will take care of feeding the newborn but if the mother does not let the newborns nurse, try to calm her and place the puppy or kitten on her nipple. Gently squeeze the base of the nipple to get some of the milk to come to the skin surface and place the newborn on it with its mouth open onto the nipple. This may need to be repeated a few times until both mom and newborn get the hang of this. If the mother is nervous, try to keep her in a quiet and warm place after she has had something to eat. If the mother is unable to nurse or is not available, the newborns will have to be bottle fed an appropriate milk replacer made for puppies or kittens. The formula should be fed through a kitten or puppy nursing bottle with a small hole made with an 18 to 22 gauge needle. The sucking action of the newborn will cause the milk to flow. The formula should be warm; test it by placing a drop on the inside of your wrist, it should not feel too hot or cold. The bottle of formula should inform you on how much to feed depending on their weights or please call Plantation Animal Hospital to help you with this information.

**Weight gain:** typically kittens weigh 100 grams at birth and they lose up to 10% of their weight within the first 24 hours of life. After this period, they should gain weight steadily, approximately 7 to 10 grams per day. You can purchase a kitchen scale at the store (Wal-mart, Target) to keep track of their weights. We recommend you weigh them twice daily and keep all of the weights written down.

Puppies' weights will vary according to the breed of dog. They will also lose up to 10% of their weight within the first 24 hours of life and then steadily gain. They gain 5 to 10% each day. If a single day goes by and your puppy or kitten does not gain weight, bring them in immediately for an evaluation.

**Stimulating for urination or bowel movement:** After each meal and naptime, if your puppy or kitten does not have the ability to urinate or have a BM on their own, place the

newborn on their back in the palm of your hand and gently stroke their genitalia with a warm, wet cotton ball. This should stimulate them to urinate and have a BM. This action simulates the mother cleaning them and normally she would stimulate them to do this. If the mother cleans the newborns, you won't find any urine or BM because she swallows it.

**Parasites:** It is very important to bring in your newborn every 2 weeks, starting at 2 weeks of age for deworming. Roundworms and hookworms are transmitted through the placenta and through the mother's milk. These parasites can cause diarrhea and can limit weight gain for your newborn. If possible, we recommend doing an intestinal parasite test on the mother before she whelps, especially if she is not on heartworm preventative.

**Dewclaw removal/tail docking:** If you choose to have dewclaws removed or tails docked, this needs to be performed within the first 5 days of life. Ear cropping, depending on the breed is usually done between 8 and 12 weeks of age.

**Health certificates:** All puppies sold in Florida are required to have a health certificate. Your vet will perform a physical examination, administer the appropriate vaccinations, check for internal and external parasites, and give deworming medication. If deemed healthy, a health certificate will be issued for each puppy.