



Caring for orphan puppies or kittens

Overview

Caring for orphan puppies or kittens can be a full-time job early on. But, is extremely important in giving them the best start to life. It is estimated that 30% of puppies and kittens less than 2 weeks of age will die. Being familiar with their needs can greatly increase the neonates' chances of survival.

Nest box

Babies should be kept in a warm cardboard box that

- has tall sides
- is dark inside
- can be closed
- is lined with towels
- has an absorbent sheet or diaper on top to remove wetness
- can have a heating pad under the box or water bottle buried within the towels

Nutrition

Species-specific baby formula is available in powder or liquid form. Always check the label carefully and mix the formula several hours ahead of time to allow the bubbles to settle. Use a pet nursing bottle to feed the baby and warm the bottle in a cup of hot water to heat the bottle evenly. Expect the baby to drink 22-26 mls/100g body weight over a whole day.

How to feed

- Every 2-3 hours during the day
- Never wake a sleeping baby. They will wake when hungry
- Feed them in a normal upright position rather than on their back
- Rub them gently after feeding to burp them
- Don't be concerned if small amounts of formula come out of the nose – this can happen if the baby gulps their food. Excessive leakage out of the nose is a concern.

Always track the baby's weight. This will give you a good idea of how the baby is tracking. A baby should gain 10% of its birth weight each day.

Starting solid food

Around 3 weeks of age, babies will start to chew at their nursing bottles. This is a great time to offer canned food. Initially offer in small amounts mixed with their formula and smear a little on their mouth.

By 4-6 weeks they should be on solid food.

Toileting

Baby animals are unable to toilet alone. Use a cotton swab or tissue to gently rub the backend to stimulate the release of urine or feces. Continue the manual stimulation for the first 3 weeks of life.

Grooming

Babies should be washed in warm water two times a day to remove any urine or feces that have soaked their coats. Use a hairdryer on low heat to dry them.

Socialization

Exposing the baby to gently human handling, play with their littermates, new sounds and objects is extremely important in the development of a well-adjusted pet.

0-13 days	Expose the pet to gently handling, touch, and warm stimuli
13-20 days	Expose the pet to humans and other pets Expose the pet to new sounds and sights
3-8 weeks	Start semi-solid food at 3 weeks Start solid food at 5 weeks From 6 weeks the interaction with humans will intensify Allow the baby to explore the environment Allow engagement with other babies and pets e.g. pouncing, rolling, rough play, mouthing, grabbing, growling Weaning occurs
8-12 weeks	Toilet training is ideal as babies understand toilet

	preferences An intense period of learning Play becomes rougher
12-20 weeks	Marking behaviors may begin