

Bottle Baby Pups Foster Guide

One of the most rewarding foster experiences is hand-raising an orphaned, newborn puppy. Without a foster willing to put in the extra time, effort, and love, this puppy would not have a chance to survive.

Newborn puppies are very dependent on their moms, or in this case, YOU!, to thrive. They count on you to feed them, help them go potty, keep them clean, and ensure they're warm.

This guide covers care of orphaned, newborn puppies from the day they're born through about four weeks, which is when they should have transitioned to gruel or wet food.

Supply List

- Crate (or equivalent)
- Lightweight bedding, absorbent towels, reusable pee pads
- Heating pad (adjustable preferred) or heating lamp
- Scale that weighs in grams and ounces
- Thermometer and lubricant
- Dry/Wet Wipes
- Disposable pee pads
- Bottle feeding supplies
 - Formula
 - Bottles (at least two)
 - Nipples (at least two, plus extra type)
 - Syringes (10ml, 20ml, 30ml)
 - Measuring cups
 - Nutritional calorie gel
 - Bulb syringe
- Video camera (for remote viewing)*
- Electric tea kettle*
- Shaker bottle*
- Bottle warmer*
- Latex-free gloves*

* *Optional but nice to have!*



Newborn Puppy Milestones

Here are the expected vitals and milestones of a healthy, newborn puppy for week 1, week 2, and week 3. Deviations from these may be cause for concern.

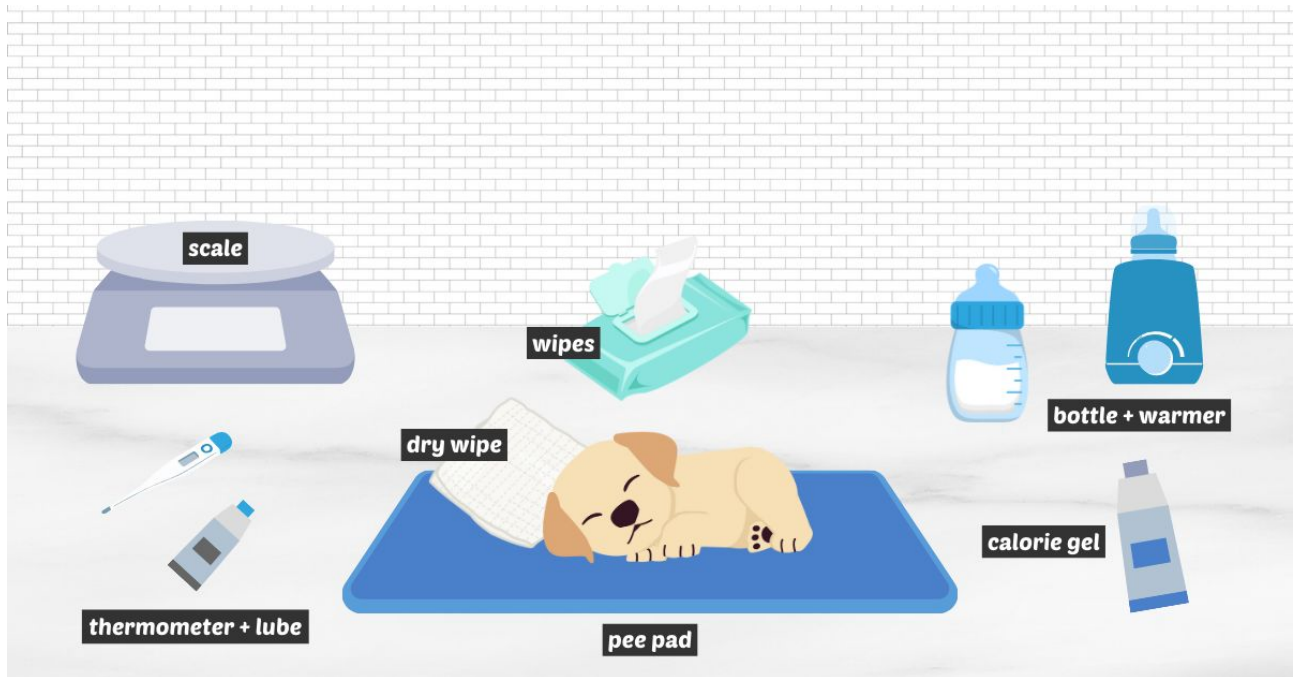
	1 Week	2 Weeks	3 Weeks
Vitals	96° to 98°F temp. ~5-10% weight gain/day	96° to 99°F temp. ~5-10% weight gain/day	100°F temp. ~5-10% weight gain/day
Activity	Energetic when eating, sleeping 90%+ of the time	Energetic when eating, sleeping 90%+ of the time	Mostly sleeping, starts to interact with littermates
Development	Crawling, snuggling with littermates	Attempts to use front legs, sleep twitches, eyes open ~10-14 days old	Starts to stand, walk, and sit; begins to potty on its own; hearing improves, baby teeth emerge
Should not be	Crying often, chilled, or lethargic	Crying often, chilled, or lethargic	Crying often, chilled, or lethargic

Healthy neonates spend the majority of their time sleeping, and when awake, they eat and go potty. This is true for newborn puppies being hand-raised or are nursing on mom. It's key to familiarize yourself with what to see in a healthy newborn so that you can spot signs of a weak or failing newborn more readily.

Bottle Feeding Newborn Puppies

To bottle feed a newborn puppy, you'll need to start by preparing the formula, then ensuring the puppy can be fed, and then feeding the puppy. An in-depth, more detailed guide can be found [here](#).

These are the basic supplies you will need to bottle feed a puppy:



Prepare the Formula

1. Warm water up to ~160° F (must be 97°-100°F when fed).
2. Put milk replacement powder in a bottle that can be shaken.
3. Add water per formula instructions (usually 1 part formula to 2 parts water).
4. Vigorously shake to combine until no lumps. Allow to cool to 100°F.

Prepare the Puppy

1. Stimulate puppy to pee/poo with dry or wet baby wipe. Pat dry.
2. Weigh puppy, record.
3. Verify puppy is warm enough to feed (over 96°F). Warm first if chilled.

Feed the Puppy

The position of the pup and the bottle should be trying to mimic the same position the pup would put itself in when trying to nurse from its mother. Never feed a puppy on its back or upside down.



1. Place puppy on stable surface covered with a disposable pee pad or a towel.
2. Hold bottle with dominant hand using your index and thumb.
3. Guide puppy to nipple to latch, use remaining fingers to act as a “wall” (no pressure needed) to keep puppy in place.
4. Puppy’s head should be tilted upwards.
5. Weigh pup to verify weight gain, record.

Cleaning and Sanitizing

1. Store extra formula in refrigerator for up to 24 hours. Discard any remaining formula after 24 hours. Discard formula left at room temperature for most than 1 hour.
2. Properly clean and sanitize bottle and nipple promptly after use. Ensure there are no clogs.

Bottle Feeding Schedule

A healthy newborn can go as long as between feedings, but a more critical, high-risk newborn may need to eat less per feeding and be fed every 2 hours. Critically ill newborns should be fed based on your vet's advice.

A newborn will cry if it's hungry, and it's important for newborn puppies to get the sleep they need, so if they're still sleeping after 2 hours routinely, try every 3 hours between feeding and so on.

As puppies get older, they should be able to go longer between feedings. Daytime feedings should be less spaced out and night time feeding may be down to once or none.

	1 Week	2 Weeks	3 Weeks
Mostly Healthy	Every 3-4 hours 6-7 feedings per day	Every 4-6 hours 4-6 feedings per day May be left to sleep overnight	Every 4-6 hours 4-6 feedings per day May be left to sleep overnight
At-Risk	Every 2-3 hours 7-8 feedings per day	Every 3-4 hours 6-7 feedings per day	Every 3-4 hours 6-7 feedings per day
Critically Ill	Up to every 2 hours Feed less per feeding, add in calorie gel if needed 8-10 feedings per day	Up to every 2 hours Feed less per feeding, add in calorie gel if needed 8-10 feedings per day	Up to every 3 hours Add in calorie gel if needed 7-8 feedings per day

Bottle Feeding Common Issues

The most common issues new bottle baby feeders encounter are: getting the puppy to latch, slow feedings, and failure to gain weight (or losing weight) or not eating.

These are things you should check whenever you're struggling to get a pup to latch, eat, or gain weight:

Is the pup warm enough? Pup should be at least 96° F prior to feeding, gradually warm until it reaches that temperature.

Is the milk warm enough? Milk should be 100° F. Reheat in bottle warmer or put bottle in a glass of very hot water. Do not microwave!

Is the nipple allowing milk to flow out of it? Check for clogs. Pups with weaker suckles may need the opening widened (use a fork tine to stretch the opening). If the opening is too wide, milk will flood the pup's mouth and cause them to choke or inhale (and aspirate) - you will need to get a new nipple.

Have you tried a different nipple? Fussy pups may require some experimentation with nipple size, length, or texture.

Is it waking up and crying between feedings? Consider feeding more frequently.

Have you increased the amount per feeding? If pup isn't gaining weight but hungry, try feeding it up to 10% more for the next couple of feedings. Pup should gain over a ~24 hour period but may not gain after every feeding.



Bottle Baby Common Issues

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Suckling and Urine Scalding

When bottle babies have a tendency to suckle on each other, this can result in them peeing on each other and themselves, which can lead to burns on their legs and paws.

Solutions

- Put oversized stuffed animals in-between pups
- Ensure you're feeding them frequently enough
- Cut up an old sock and place around pup's torso
- Separate pups as last resort
- Apply A&D Diaper Cream on irritated areas

Crying excessively

Shriller, high-pitched cries may indicate pain, especially if cries are elicited by touch, which may require medical attention (see [When to Be Concerned](#)). Other cries typically indicate pup is hungry, cold, or needs to potty.

Solutions

- Check heat source
- Reconsider feeding schedule
- Stimulate to potty

Bloating

If the pup's belly feels unusually tight, or as if it is full of air, it may be bloated. This can make a pup feel uncomfortable.

Solutions

- Avoid overfeeding
 - Use anti-colic bottles when feeding to avoid air ingestion
 - Add Infant Gas-x (or generic equivalent) to formula
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Diarrhea

Ideally, newborn puppies should have slightly soft, brownish to yellowish stools, but they should not be runny, liquid, or foamy.

Solutions

- Avoid overfeeding
 - Add 10% more water to formula
 - Add probiotics
 - Ensure proper cleaning and sanitization of bottles/nipples
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Constipation

Bottle babies can experience constipation as much as they can diarrhea.

Solutions

- Add 25% more water to formula until constipation resolves

Week 1

Handling

- Stimulate to potty before each feeding
- Weigh before and after each feeding, record
- Wipe and dry each pup before returning to crate

Care

- Bottle feed based on the [Bottle Feeding Schedule](#)
- Change linens at least twice daily (up to after every feeding)
- Check heating source after each feeding

Week 2

Handling

- Stimulate to potty before each feeding
- Weigh before and after each feeding, record
- Wipe and dry each pup before returning to crate
- Give pups 5 to 10 minutes to move around on a disposable pee pad (“tummy time”) one to two times a day

Care

- Bottle feed based on the [Bottle Feeding Schedule](#)
- Change linens at least twice daily (up to after every feeding)
- Check heating source after each feeding

Week 3

Handling

- Stimulate to potty before each feeding
- Weigh before and after each feeding, record
- Wipe and dry each pup before returning to crate
- Give pups 10 minutes to move around on a disposable pee pad (“tummy time”) two to three times a day in week 3

Care

- Bottle feed based on the [Bottle Feeding Schedule](#)
- Change linens at least twice daily (up to after every feeding)
- Check heating source after each feeding
- Increase crate size if necessary
- Add potty area (disposable pee pad to take up $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of their space) once they start pottying more on their own

Add the end of week 3 (21 days), you can Introduce Food and Water (see handout).

Supplemental Handouts

Please refer to the following supplemental handouts that complement our Bottle Baby Pups foster guide:

- Bottle Babies: When to Be Concerned
- Introducing Food and Water
- Introducing the Potty Area
- Setting Up the Puppy Pen

