

Min Pin Orphans

by Bonnie Foster

(As published in the Pinscher Patter, March 2005)

So you have done all your homework and your favorite bitch has been bred to a favorable stud dog of choice. Then there is the long wait of gestation, and if all goes well, a beautiful litter of puppies in 58 to 65 days. Sometimes you get a singleton, sometimes a blessing of more. If you were lucky as I was on my last litter, and were truly blessed with the largest litter I have ever had, a single boy, and four girls, then you're off to head start.

Being pre-cautious I took each puppy as soon as they were free of the dam, helped with the umbilical cord, cleared away the sac, and immediately cleaned out the mouth of slime the best I could, and did the swing thing; carefully holding the well braced puppy in two hands, and swinging from over my head to knee level, expelling any fluids there may be in the lungs. Mamma wasn't pleased with me, but after a gusty wail, she had her baby back and I helped it find a nursing station. Then there was pulling breach pup, and repeating the ritual, of being "doctor grandma" on site. Call it excessive or maybe not, depends on ones experience. When you have lost an entire litter due to aspiration of the lungs, and resulting pneumonia and fading puppy syndrome, and there is nothing humanly possible one can do to save them, believe me you try anything. I have tried the oxygen and the lasix and the whole nine yards, complete with huge vet bills, trying to save a puppy or a litter, and they still die. It is truly a devastating experience, but it happens to all of us at some point in time, for one reason or another. I was previously a firm believer in letting the dam do most of the work, and if they were meant to live, they would. I mean you help pull the breach pup, and that sort of thing, and make sure momma and kids are properly warm, and supplement if necessary, and some minor interference, but never to such lengths. Now it is policy here. That puppy you have, even the tiniest runt, might be your next Best in Show winner and after all you have invested, I prefer not to loose any.

There is no profit in breeding Min Pins, at least in my experience; it has always been in the negative money wise. You know, you ship a bitch, ship her home, and she doesn't conceive, or you get a singleton, or you loose a puppy in ear cropping surgery, or whatever the case may be.....the odd pet, or even show puppy a person sells, never makes up the expenses. So perhaps you are like me, and do it for the improvement of the breed and the plain enjoyment of having those furry kids in our humble lives, and the occasional "wahoo" feeling when we

are blessed with that five point major, and a group placing. Isn't that what is is all about? They truly are my kids, almost as close as any child could be.

Anyway, before I get off in another tangent.....all goes well, you get the bitch an ultrasound exam when she is complete, and all looks good. Safe backt at home, after driving through an Albertan winter storm, and howling wind, mamma and pups are placed in a new whelping box, complete with a heat pad set on low, and that first tentative week, goes by as it should. You think you are out of the woods, as that time frame is when most losses occur. Everything is going great, momma is calm and a good mother, discharges are normal, and puppies that you routinely weigh every day, are growing and thriving. Most of week two passes much the same. You sigh in enjoyment, as you watch them contentedly sleep. Then one night just shy of the two week frme, you let that foundation, favorite bitch out to do her business at midnight, and then crawl into bed yourself. Not a sound escapes that box, other than an occasional sucking slurp, and the same peaceful sounds that one would expect to hear. 5:30 a.m. rolls around, and your husband] gets up, and starts to let dogs out, as he does every day, before he heads out to work, and in your half sleepy state you hear him give you that frenzied call. Then your worst night mare comes to life, as you find that prize bitch dead and already stiffening up. I can not express in words the horrible feeling that overcomes you. The silent killer has visited.....blood clot and resulting stroke. This was made even more devastating by the fact that she was the last of a line.

Then the real work begins, and sleepless nights become necessary, if you intent to keep those future BIS winners alive. Thankfully, being on farm and having other livestock around I have a well stocked medicine cabinet, a first aid kit, and emergency puppy supplies on hand. That Canine Mammalac you had stored in your freezer is about to become a God send! Lactated Ringers (saline dextrose solution, enema solution (for human childred), mineral oil, plain uncolored and unflavored Kyro syrup (or glucose), syringes, needles, tube feeding supplies, a Playtex baby bottle and preemie-baby nipple (slow flow) and a long list of other supplies that you hoped you would never need, but had anyway, are about to become your deliverence. If you are a breeder, I would hope you know what most of those things are for, and you have them on hand. You never know when a similare experience might just happen to you.

There are many pros and cons on whether one should bottle feed or tube feed. I am not about to take on that challenge, but I will say what worked for me. Someone I highly admire, and who has been breeding min pin for over 30 years, Linda Stevens, gave me this recipe for formula. Keep refrigerated; discard any un-

used portions after two days.

- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- 1/2 can of water
- 7 inch squeeze of Nutracal (high calorie paste by Foster and Smith)
- 2 egg yolks (NO EGG WHITES)
- 1 capful canola oil

Or because I didn't have some of those things on hand I used temporarily:

- Canine Mamalac (from my vet). Follow directions... 3 tablespoons for 100 cc.
- Heaping teaspoon of regular mayonnaise (Replaces the egg and oil)
- Dollop of plain Kryo syrup

Eventually I added an egg yolk, and oil as they got used to the new food source. Blend all ingredients or use a wire whisk.

Sometimes the problem with the formula you buy from the vet is that, in my opinion and experience, it is not enough nutrition for adequate growth. Make sure you boil the water, and allow it time to cool sufficiently. Most 4 oz. puppies need about 30 cc daily, or about 1 to 2 cc per feeding. As mine were almost two weeks old, so they were consuming about 10 to 15 cc per feeding. Use your common sense. The tummy should be full, but not over distended. Calorie intake needs to be adjusted according to the growth of the puppies. A pup may have a little bubbling by his mouth when bottle feeding, but the milk should not be running out of his mouth. When the bottle is held upside down, the milk should drip out, NOT FLOW OUT, in a stream, or they will get fluid in their lungs and those that get pneumonia will likely die. At first I fed every three hours, often waking the pups from slumber to do so (I slept on the couch beside them every night. You need to be able to hear them! If one is vomiting, you'd best be close to assist and clean its nose afterward.) As they grew, I allowed the pups to let me know when they were hungry, and they would howl when it was time.....I find bottles made for puppies do not work well, and prefer the playtex version for human children. It's a snap to clean up, and is made of stronger plastic. I continued to keep a heat pad under them, only from low, the setting was now on high. Puppies pile if they are cold, and pant and cry when they are too hot. Adjust accordingly. Chilling puppies is disastrous; as they can not regulate their own body heat. Never under any

circumstances feed milk to a chilled puppy, as their entire intestinal track literally shuts down. (Made that mistake a number of years ago.) Food that was fed previously just sits there, thus you are adding formula to an already full stomach. Use a thermometer gently inserted in the rectum, or under the tongue to be sure of the temperature, as sometimes they feel warm from the heat pad, but internally they are still chilled. Often with chilling also comes dehydration. Sometimes all we can do is inject lactated ringers under the skin. It should make the skin swell out. Make sure the solution is not cold, or you are further chilling and actually shocking the puppy. Have your veterinarian show you how to do this and how much. Two indicators of hydration issues are loss of elasticity of the skin (the skin stays tented when gently pinched up) and decreased saliva production (the gums will feel tacky and are a different shade of pink). (I learned this valuable information while training endurance horses.) Overly dry rooms in winter can be a problem and you may wish to operate a single humidifier in the room.

Hypoglycemia can also be a problem, and will create inactivity and depression in a puppy. Without the aid of added glucose to their system, they may develop muscle twitching and/or seizures and they become un-responsive. I have used Kyro syrup on both young and old dogs, as this can also be a problem in our HOT dry summers. I always keep a supply in my shelf and have had to use it on more than one occasion.

If a puppy becomes weak from lack of good suck reflex, we are left with no option but to tube feed. And I have good eaters and poor eaters in this last litter of five. A mentor in our wonderful breed, Janice Horne, first explained tube feeding to me several years back, and it can be a quick killer if you get into the trachea and lungs, and a life saver for that weak pup. It is not impossible to get the tube into the lungs, but highly unlikely. Whatever you do, do not overfeed; less is better when first trying this method. I have provided an article that explains this process in better detail. I absolutely hate to have to tube feed, as I feel it is totally unnatural, but sometimes we have to do things we don't want to. That is life. And with this letter, I learned to fine tune the process as it proved necessary with the smallest two puppies. No one likes to tube feed, but it is the fastest method in a puppy that needs to be supplemented, and as with large litters one would never get any sleep, as you are no sooner done than you are starting all over again. The biggest trick is getting the correct sized tube and a syringe that properly fits on the end, and making sure you do not empty the contents of the syringe too quickly. You must dispense the fluid slowly. I use a #8 catheter tube, which I had to cut the end off so it would properly fit a smaller syringe. This worked fine for these slightly older puppies, but would not be small enough for new

born pups as it has two holes in] the stomach end of the tube. I feed the puppies in my lap, after drawing the fluid into the syringe. It takes a bit of practice to hold a squirming puppy, the tube, and syringe all at once. You are dealing with a puppy that doesn't want any part of what you are doing, although it will swallow the tube with gentle pressure and guidance, and knowing when it is just the gag reflex you are dealing with and not misplacing the tube in the trachea and lungs. Then you must hold squirming pup, keep the tube in place, and press the syringe plunger. I then pinch the end of the tube near the mouth and gently pull it out. It sounds difficult but you will soon get the "feel" of tube feeding.

The rest were bottle fed, but even with this method you have to exercise caution, as pups tend to guzzle and fill their lungs along with their stomach. They also can be pigs and over eat and make themselves sore and colicky (gas accumulation in the stomach). With this method you have to also take extra time to burp each puppy, and be watchful of milk running out of their nose, and vomiting from overfeeding. Eye droppers are not recommended! They are slow and laborious, and can be a tremendous risk. Burping the puppy can be done by gently but firmly patting the back, or by firmly rubbing their sides up and down; I prefer patting.

When there is no dam to assist your efforts, you must also help the pups defecate and pass urine. Unfortunately they are born being un-able to perform this function, until they are three/four weeks old. This is simply done with a warm, damp, but well wrung out rag, and gently passing the rag from naval to anus. Pups should urinate with every feeding and may or may not defecate at the same time. This should be monitored though, as they should defecate every six hours, at the latest, or every other feeding. Constipation in puppies is rare, but can be solved with an enema. When this litter switched from dam to formula, I had a couple of the pups get this temporary problem for the first two days, and I attribute it to the cange over. I used one cc of enema solution drawn up in a syringe with a small extended "nub" on the end, and with a little smear of vaseline, I inserted it into the rectum. This stuff works quickly and within three minutes I got results. Puppy will let you know it is time to help, by acting uncomfortable, and becoming restless. A word of caution here, do not overuse. If constipation remains a problem consult your vet, as there may be other underlying causes, such as your formula having an insufficient water amount. Puppy stools are normally fairly soft, but formed and usually yellow/brown in color. Watery diarrhea and/or stool of another color such as green are signs of infection, especially if in combination with vomiting, and should be taken to the vet ASAP, as young pups can dehydrate and deteriorate quickly. So when in doubt, call your vet. I was fortunate and as

this was not an issue for me.

Last but not least, is the duty of giving your babies several baths every day, as would their dam. This can also be done with a warm damp rag. The idea is not to saturate the puppy, but to get it cleaned up from excrement of any kind, and to stimulate the body all over. It is a good time to examine them, and is when I do my weighing of the pups. It is also good policy to change thier bedding, so infection does not set in from unsanitary conditions. Rub the puppies face from nose to inside corner of their eye to outside corner of their eye and on back over their ears. This particularly important when their eyes are beginning to open. (Any green discharge from the eyes is unnatural.) Puppy's skin should be smooth and free of dry skin flakes. I used a very small amount of ostrich oil and rubbed it all over them. It has safe natural ingredients, very similar to a dogs own natural body oils. Later in life I also have natural ostrich oil soap for bathing the adult and older puppies, but prefer not to use soap of any kind on the puppies prior to 8 weeks of age.

I make no clams to now being an expert. Even though I h ave been in the breed more than fifteen years, my knowledge is small potatoes in comparison to those I well respect like Linda Stevens, Jan Horne, Marcia Tucker, Pam Ruggie, Beverly Creed, and numerous others with an outstanding amount of knowledge to share. I only wish to relate my own experiences, and if it can be helpful to someone else so much the better. May you never have to experience this devastating loss as I have.