

## Babies and Milk Replacers

In the perfect world, our management of females is to remove the need for milk replacers! That is not always possible especially when moms are not keeping up with demand due to large litters. The best use of a milk replacer is to “top off” a fast growing litter to take the demand off mom and save those small puppies or kittens.

### Even growth curve:

Bottle feeding the litter once a day until mom comes into her milk is another management tool. By doing this the puppies or kittens do not have to contend with the flush of milk at two weeks that gives them a loose stool. When once a day feeding is used, their system is processing maximum calories from birth and they achieve a more even growth curve. This also helps in decreasing losses. Losses at 48 hours to one week are usually caused by malnutrition and do not have to happen.



### What to do about “Nipple Guarding”

Large litters often lose several puppies in the first two weeks due to malnutrition. One of the issues is “nipple guarding” by the strongest puppies. Puppies guard the best milk producing nipple by hanging on to it even though they are not nursing. They do this so they can eliminate the competition for the best milk. People often hand-feed the small puppy but the small puppy needs mom’s milk. Mom’s milk is the perfect food for a puppy.

Instead of hand-feeding the smallest puppy, pull the three to four largest puppies away from mom and feed them twice a day with a milk replacer. Place the large puppies in a box on a heating pad or with a hot water bottle. They will be content with the warmth and the tiny guys will benefit with mom. This works well in kittens also.

You may have to take the tiny puppy and gently rub their tiny face sideways on the nipple to get them to attach. On the first day you try this, rub mom’s mammary gland and tummy to encourage her to let the milk down if that is an issue. If the puppy is slow, I like to give a few drops of [Doc Roy’s Forti Cal™ Liquid or Gel](#) and get them on a nipple. The sugar surge gets them drinking and the liquid is easy to swallow. Stay away from pastes in the new born. Be sure the small puppy is getting milk and his tummy is full before returning the larger litter mates to mom. After a few days, you only have to pull the large puppy out and the little guys are ready to nurse without competition. Mom has plenty of milk by week two but breeders continue to pull the big puppy from mom to let the tiny guys eat. No need to feed the big puppies if mom has plenty of milk, just pull them to let tiny guys nurse.

### Nurturing the Orphan

Orphans need a colostrum substitute like [Breeders’ Edge® Nurture Mate](#) in the first two weeks to replace the colostrum protection mom would give. Puppies are born with a sterile gut. Mom seeds the puppy’s gut with good bacteria while cleaning them. An orphan pup, after 48 hours of life, needs good bacteria. The solution is to feed a probiotic. Probiotics come in a powder form that you can add to the milk after it is mixed and heated. It is best to use a probiotic in the milk for the first two weeks and any time that a nursing puppy, orphan or not, has a loose stool. GI upset is common in nursing and hand-fed babies. Most diarrhea issues in the nursing puppy are from over eating but a few doses of [kaolin/pectin](#) and a [probiotic](#) will solve this problem.

### Foster Moms Can Help

I hope you never get an orphan puppy to raise, but if you do, enlist a retired female to care for them. We often use retired moms to help care for big litters or for babies with issues. I have a friend with a schnauzer that takes any baby and mothers it when bottle feeding. The baby can be returned to birth mom, if the situation allows it, even after a week’s time. If you always put the retired mom in the same kennel she will soon learn she is getting a baby when that happens. Foster moms will ease your labor of caring for bottle-raised babies by mothering, cleaning, kissing and keeping them warm when you are not available.

If necessary, you can help orphan puppies survive by fostering them on a nursing mom. I do this quickly and with ease. Most dog and cat moms are amazing in their ability to know when a baby needs to be mothered and will take them without incident. The kindness these moms show to babies is overwhelming the first time you see it.

### Controlling the “Sore Bottom”

Sore bottoms are common in bottle raised kittens or puppies. Bio-Mos® is a yeast type product and soothes the tummy as yogurt does. It also changes the stool pH so they do not get the diaper rash fanny we always fight when bottle feeding. [Breeders' Edge® Foster Care™](#) has the Bio-Mos® in it which controls sore fanny's making the baby more comfortable with stimulation to urinate and defecate. Give it a try if you have not. Foster Care™ is great for supplementing or as a total diet and is easy on the tummy.

I hope you never need to bottle feed orphans, but if you do, a little precaution can make your effort successful!

Dr. B

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