

Tube feeding puppies and kittens

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Bottle feeding can be used for puppies with a strong suckle response. Feeding with an eyedropper, syringe, or sucking on a makeup sponge should be avoided.

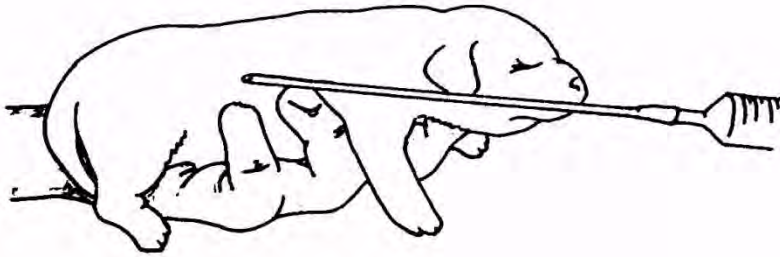
For pups that won't take a bottle, who are too small and weak to bottle feed, or who have cleft palates, tube feeding is recommended.

MATERIALS

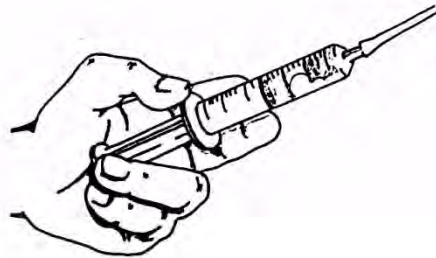
1. Goat's milk, pasteurized, or commercial milk replacer
2. Feeding tube, silicon or red rubber feeding tube 8 to 14 French
3. Permanent magic marker
4. Syringe of appropriate size with catheter tip (10 or 60 cc)
5. Puppy scale – feed at a rate of 20 cc per 16 oz of body weight. Repeat every 3 to 6 hours, based on pup's condition.

STEPS:

1. Establish a well-lit warm location where you can hold the pup comfortably and all materials are within reach. Be attentive and do not rush.
2. Take the puppy's temperature rectally - do NOT feed unless the rectal temperature is between 96 degrees F and 99 degrees F. If the puppy's temperature is below 96 degrees F, warm the pup before feeding.
3. On a safe surface, hold the pup with the neck extended. Hold the tapered end of the feeding tube even with the last rib of the largest pup to be fed. Lay the tube along the side of the pup, mark the tube even with the tip of the pup's nose.



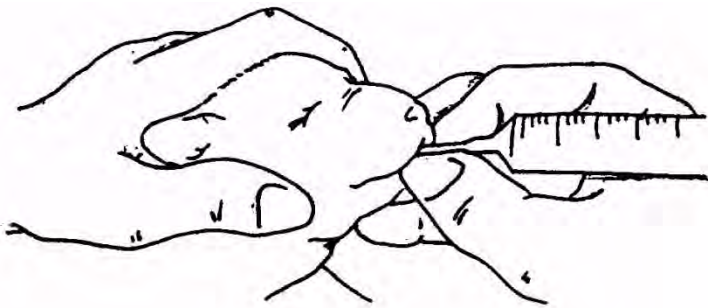
4. Fill the syringe with the calculated amount of formula or milk (20 cc/16 oz body weight or approximately 1 cc per ounce) plus 2 cc of air. Warm the formula to body temperature in a warm water bath – avoid microwaving.



5. Attach the syringe to the feeding tube.

6. With the pup fully awake, warm (over 96 degrees F rectal temp) lying horizontally on the chest, gently pass the tube over the center of the pups tongue, applying gentle pressure to slide the tube up to the mark. If resistance is met, remove tube and start over.

7. With your left hand if you are right handed, cup your left hand around the back of the pups head and hold the tube between your index and middle finger to prevent it from moving out of the correct position while feeding.



8. BEFORE FEEDING, firmly pinch the pup on the foot or tail. If the pup vocalizes, the tube placement is correct and you can proceed with feeding. If the tube is mistakenly in the trachea, the pup will struggle but will not be able to make any sound – STOP IMMEDIATELY, REMOVE THE TUBE AND START THE PROCESS OVER.

9. With your right hand, depress the plunger on the syringe, NOT too quickly, delivering the calculated amount, stopping sooner should milk reflux out of the pup's mouth or nose.



10. Flex the tube on itself to prevent milk from being aspirated in to the pup's airway. Repeat for each pup.

11. Wash syringe and tube with hot soapy water and allow to air dry until next feeding.

12. Stimulate the external anal and urinary orifices to effect defecation and urination with a warm moistened cotton ball or washcloth.

By taking adequate precautions, tube feeding can be safe and effective.

There are 6 guidelines for safe tube feeding – the 6 P's.

1. **Premeasure** tube – nose to rib
2. **Prewarm** – puppy and formula
3. **Pass** with chin down
4. **Pass** to the left
5. **Pinch** → vocalize before feeding,
6. **Place** tube end in bowl of water to check for bubbles

Colostrum – there is no commercially available colostrum for dogs or cats.

1. Milk
2. Volume to feed
3. Frequency to feed
4. Feeding techniques
5. How NOT to feed
 - a. Makeup sponge
 - b. Eyedropper
6. Alternatives
 - a. Bottle
 - b. Medi-nurser
 - c. Miracle nipple
7. Additional supportive care
 - a. Oxygen
 - b. Plasma
 - c. IO fluids
 - d. Antibiotics
 - e. Glucose
 - f. 4Hs from Neocare
 - i. Hypothermia
 - ii. Hypoxia
 - iii. Hypoglycemia
 - iv. Hypoglycemia

*** A shout-out to the cat people – in most of the places where puppies and bitches are mentioned, the terms kittens and queens can be substituted. This is not meaning to short the feline practitioners and breeders but is done in the interest of brevity and to prevent awkward language use.

