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## NUTRITION

Managing puppy nutrition is very different depending upon each breed and each litter even. We all know that parasites, weather changes, cage types (flooring especially), crowding, poorly cleaned cages, noise, etc., cause stress and can lead to a negative energy balance. A negative energy balance is nothing more than spending more energy than a puppy takes in - it can happen in any kennel. A negative energy balance is like a bank overdraft. One must have the funds available before you can spend them. A puppy must have enough energy (food intake) to meet all the demands put on its system. Obviously smaller puppies and "runts" of a litter are more susceptible. When a puppy's body reaches a negative energy balance, it begins to break down muscle tissue to meet the body's needs. Sometimes the negative energy balance becomes serious enough that a pup can lose up to 25% or more of its body weight in as little as 2 days. You can have a very thin puppy very quickly and it will take several days, if not weeks, to reverse this process. In addition, if a puppy isn't eating well; it most likely isn't drinking enough either. This in turn, leads to dehydration. These puppies become critical cases quickly and require a great deal more attention, special feed, and perhaps medications to turn them around. Remember it is imperative that the intestinal health of each puppy is at its best to be able to absorb the nutrients that you feed. Parasites rob the nutrients and damage the lining of the intestines, reducing the puppy's ability to absorb the much needed nutrients that pass through. If the cages are not kept clean, the puppy can pick up bacteria and re'infest' with parasites - both of which overwhelm the intestine, reducing the absorption of nutrients. If a puppy cannot absorb the nutrients that pass through its intestinal tract, you would get the same effect if you dump its food in the trash. Unabsorbed nutrients pass out in the feces.

Below is a list of foods you can try to help smaller pups or to reverse a negative energy balance case.

1. Fruit loops (generic is fine) - It will entice them to eat and hopefully from there they begin eating food with more substance to it. Fruit loops are almost pure sugar and therefore maintain blood sugar levels, but won't help put on weight.
2. Cottage Cheese - Offers protein, sugar, and a high fat content as well as containing probiotics. But realize that a pup in a negative energy balance may be lactose intolerant and vomit on cottage cheese.
3. Probiotics - Besides the immunity boost it offers, these gut bacteria will help to breakdown foods and provide more nutrients for absorption from a puppy's intestinal tract.
4. Canned Cat Food - Offers protein, a high fat content, water, and sugar. Puppies can add weight quickly due to its high fat content.
5. Royal Canin Recovery, Science Diet A/D, Royal Canin Starter Mousse, and Purina EN products offer highly digestible moist feed that is high in fat, carbohydrates, vitamins, mineral and protein. The puppy's body doesn't have to work as hard to digest these feeds as it does with dry kibble. Also, these feeds are very palatable (puppies like the taste of these feeds).
6. Canned Dog Food - Higher fat content than kibble, protein, sugars, and more water content. Cesar's has been readily accepted by puppies we work with, but you may have a favorite too. It is also in a small container and not much is wasted. It always tastes better to puppies when a can is first opened than from a refrigerator and heated up.
7. L-Carnitine - An amino acid that assists breakdown of fatty acids into a usable energy source. It is to be given in addition to the above products, not as a substitute.

Remember, good nutrition not only helps a puppy avoid the negative energy balance; but also helps build a better immune system to prevent and fight infections. A well-nourished puppy will have brighter eyes, a healthier hair coat and more playful energy that we all know and love.

Should you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact a staff veterinarian at 800-735-5364.

Dr Cindy Sasse  
Lambriar Staff Veterinarian

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