

What would you do?

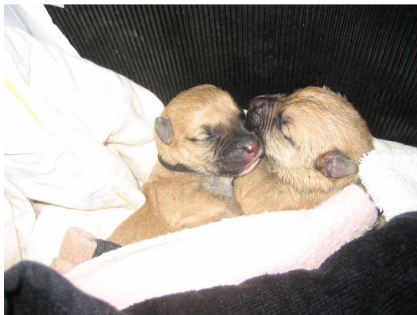
It's a sad fact that here in Portugal we have an ever growing population of stray dogs. The rescue centres (that are mostly supported solely by charity) are bursting at the seams and in reality are already filled over their capacity. So, what would you do if one day as you stopped at the rubbish bin you heard crying coming from inside.

Would you stop like we did and take the puppies, or would you walk away and pretend you didn't hear anything.

We work closely with a local vet and so we took the puppies straight there, they were freezing and very hungry and to be honest the outlook didn't look great.

Options were and are limited at this point. Not many rescue centres will take newborn puppies, as they just don't have the resources to care for them. We had a choice to make, we could take care of them or we put them all to sleep.

We chose to try to save them and I set about the task with determination. It's very hard work and extremely time consuming so in all it is not a task to take on if you have a very hectic life style.



The first three-weeks of the pup's lives are the most critical in terms of survival and also are the most time consuming for you. We were convinced our puppies were only a day old as they still had the umbilical cord attached and this meant that the chances of these pups getting the first most important milk from their mother was very remote. The first milk from the mother contains Colostrum. This gives the puppies all the defense they need to fight most diseases until it is time for them to have their first vaccinations. However the puppies can only absorb this in the first 24 hours of nursing. Through the vet we were able to help our puppies by drawing blood from our healthy vaccinated dogs, separating the serum from the blood cells and giving this to the puppies. Very technical but very effective.

Puppies are born with a very under developed nervous system. The main reason for this is so that the mother can still move around easily and quickly right up to when she whelps and also to enable her a fast recovery so she can go straight out to find food after the pups are born. The fact that the puppies are so underdeveloped means that they can not easily move very far very quickly and so are less likely to get lost while their mother is out hunting.

The down side to this is that the puppies are totally dependant. Which for us meant we had to literally play mother. This entailed not only bottle feeding them every 3 hours with special puppy formula (dogs cannot digest cows milk) but also stimulating them to defecate and urinate before and after each feed.

Sadly we lost two puppies within the first week. It was upsetting but I was told that even with a mother puppies die for lots of different reasons and it didn't necessarily have anything to do with something we did or didn't do.

Still with four healthy puppies growing stronger and stronger each day we had to keep going and it wasn't long before teeth began to develop and then eyes started to open. It was at about 3 weeks when the first puppy opened his eyes and the others followed day by day. I remember been so excited by this. It just felt like a mile stone for these poor little things we didn't even think would survive.

From that point there development was obvious day by day, soon we were weaning them on to puppy food which was great fun but very messy!

We had our problems, this experience was not all plain sailing but I wouldn't change any of it. To see the pups go from these defenseless little things to the happiest, healthiest lively little puppies was just amazing.

All the puppies have wonderful new homes (I must admit I have been very fussy over where they went) that is all apart from one. Which brings me to William. He is the sweetest little bundle of fun who really deserves a special home just like his brothers and sister. He is now nine weeks and really needs to settle soon into his new home. This is a very special request. If anyone thinks they could offer this adorable puppy the home he deserves please get in touch.



Remember, to be fair to your pet consider neutering, especially if you have no intention of breeding from your dog in the future. This is the only way we can try to over come the problem of unwanted dogs and cats. Promoting this idea will save a lot of people a lot of heart ache in the future.