

# MODULE 10

## Preventive Health Care: Birth Through Twelve Weeks

### Learning Objectives

At the completion of this module, the breeder should understand vaccination protocols, parasite control, routine veterinary care, biosecurity, health monitoring, and record keeping necessary to raise healthy puppies through twelve weeks of age.

### Building a Foundation of Health

Preventive health care begins long before a puppy leaves for its new home. Every decision made by the breeder—from sanitation and nutrition to parasite control and vaccination—contributes to the puppy's future health. Successful breeders recognize that prevention is almost always more effective, less expensive, and less stressful than treatment.

The goal during the first twelve weeks is to support normal growth while protecting puppies from infectious disease and parasitic infestations. This requires careful observation, consistent management, and a close working relationship with a veterinarian.

### Parasite Control

Internal parasites are among the most common health concerns in young puppies. Even puppies born to healthy dams may acquire parasites before birth or through nursing.

Roundworms and hookworms are particularly important because they can affect growth, cause digestive upset, contribute to anemia, and occasionally threaten survival.

Routine deworming is recommended because puppies may carry parasites even when fecal examinations are negative.

A commonly used schedule includes:

| Age     | Deworming        |
|---------|------------------|
| 2 Weeks | Pyrantel pamoate |
| 4 Weeks | Pyrantel pamoate |
| 6 Weeks | Pyrantel pamoate |
| 8 Weeks | Pyrantel pamoate |

| <b>Age</b>  | <b>Deworming</b>            |
|-------------|-----------------------------|
| 10–12 Weeks | As directed by veterinarian |

Breeders should consult their veterinarian regarding specific products and regional parasite risks.

## Vaccination Principles

Puppies receive temporary immunity through maternal antibodies found in colostrum. While these antibodies protect puppies early in life, they can also interfere with vaccinations.

Please refer to your veterinarian, this should be considered general advice. Local regulations may differ.

This creates a period known as the "window of susceptibility." During this time, maternal antibodies may be too low to provide protection yet still high enough to interfere with vaccination.

Because breeders cannot determine exactly when this window occurs in every puppy, vaccines are administered as a series rather than as a single injection.

Core vaccinations typically protect against:

- Canine Distemper Virus
- Canine Parvovirus
- Canine Adenovirus (Hepatitis)

Most puppies begin vaccination between six and eight weeks of age and receive boosters every three to four weeks until at least sixteen weeks of age.

A typical schedule might be:

| <b>Age</b>  | <b>Vaccination</b>  |
|-------------|---------------------|
| 6–8 Weeks   | First Core Vaccine  |
| 10–12 Weeks | Booster             |
| 14–16 Weeks | Final Puppy Booster |

Rabies vaccination is generally administered between twelve and sixteen weeks according to state and local regulations.

Please refer to your veterinarian, this should be considered general advice. Local regulations may differ.

# Biosecurity

Disease prevention involves more than vaccinations. Young puppies are particularly vulnerable to infectious diseases, especially canine parvovirus.

Breeders should limit exposure to:

- Dog parks
- Pet stores
- High-traffic dog areas
- Unvaccinated dogs
- Dogs of unknown health status

Visitors should wash their hands before handling puppies. Shoes and clothing that have been exposed to unfamiliar dogs may also carry disease organisms.

Good sanitation practices remain one of the most effective disease prevention tools available.

# Veterinary Examinations

Every litter should receive routine veterinary evaluation.

Veterinary examinations allow for:

- Assessment of growth and development
- Identification of congenital abnormalities
- Detection of heart murmurs
- Evaluation of eyes and ears
- Discussion of vaccination protocols
- Development of preventive care plans

Breeders should establish a veterinary-client-patient relationship (VCPR) before emergencies occur.

# Health Records

Each puppy should have an individual health record that includes:

- Birth information
- Weight records
- Deworming dates
- Vaccination dates
- Veterinary examinations
- Medical treatments
- Identification information

Complete records demonstrate professionalism and provide valuable information to future owners.

### **Key Points**

- Prevention is more effective than treatment.
- Internal parasite control should begin early.
- Vaccinations are administered as a series because of maternal antibody interference.
- Biosecurity helps prevent devastating infectious diseases.
- Veterinary examinations are an essential part of puppy management.
- Accurate health records should accompany every puppy.