

Diarrhea and Loose Stools in Puppies by Karen Black

Here are my observations on diarrhea in puppies. Hopefully others will jump in and add to this !!!

Causes:

1. Illness

Typically has other signs too -- possibly vomiting, lethargy, anorexia.

2. Parasites

Many parasites can be present with no other symptoms. However, giardia and coccidia (neither is eradicated by Strongid) often have symptoms. Coccidia will cause diarrhea, sometimes with an odd odor. It will also cause anorexia, sometimes lethargy, and can cause traces of blood in the stool. In its worst form coccidia can cause very watery stools and can lead to dehydration and sometimes death. Coccidia is very opportunistic, lives in the environment for prolonged periods of time (like forever!) and is typically found in all animals in low numbers. Coccidia is usually controlled by the immune system. Adults usually do not have problems with coccidia unless they are immune compromised. Puppies however, with their developing immune systems can have problems with it. During times of stress (weaning, food changes, after deworming, during transitions to their new homes, illness) coccidia will raise its opportunistic head because the body is busy dealing with other factors. Coccidiostats, such as sulpha drugs are used to slow down the reproduction of coccidia in order to let the immune system catch up and deal with it. Coccidiostats do not actually get rid of the coccidia, just limits reproduction until the immune system can keep it at minimal levels.

Giardia, a.k.a. beaver fever, can also wreak havoc with puppies. Giardia will range from mild diarrhea to a very sick puppy. Giardia also lives in the environment for a very long time. Most animals will eventually get over it without intervention if left to their own devices, though very young, very old, or otherwise compromised animals can also get deathly ill from Giardia.

Less common are other parasites such as whipworm, cryptosporidium, etc. so I won't go into those. All of these parasites have lots of references on the web.

So, after introducing food and after vaccinations and after deworming I am always on the lookout for coccidia. Some breeders routinely treat for it regardless, if they have had it in the environment because it does not generally go away.

3. Overnutrition

Neonate puppies who's dam has a ton of milk or who has particularly rich milk can have "milk diarrhea". This type of diarrhea typically clears as soon as food is introduced. Milk diarrhea usually is not seen after the pups are eating food well. Homemade diets that are over rich in some ingredients could cause diarrhea.

Too much Omega-3, Fish Oil, Vitamin E will cause "oily poop" that is loose. Cutting back on the amount given will resolve oil poop quickly.

4. Stress

Stress related colitis in shy or sensitive dogs is common.

5. Food sensitivities/allergies

Usually not seen before 10 weeks of age but if a puppy is going to develop a food sensitivity it is often between 10 and 16 weeks of age. Sometimes removing the protein source of the food the pup is on, and putting them on a completely different family of protein will solve the problem and the pup can eventually be put back to that protein source. For example, a puppy raised on lamb and rice could be put on chicken and rice (red vs white meat). I have had more than one pup that has been able to go back to the original protein source after a few weeks. Seems from my experience that the 10 - 16 week time is a little touchy for proteins.

I have found from my experience that a puppy that takes a piece of food from the bowl, goes away from the bowl to carefully eat it, then returns for another piece, probably has a food sensitivity. Somehow in their mind they are associating the bowl with the discomfort or something. Usually if this continues they will eventually start itching too, or rubbing their faces vigorously after eating, or chewing on their feet. Invariably when I've had a pup pick up food one piece at a time (and I'm talking goldens for the most part, my experience with cotons is limited to three litters) and I change foods, they stop taking the food away one piece at a time and if they've had other symptoms they go away too.

The stools associated with food sensitivities are usually pasty (like a cow's), not runny or watery.

6. Ingestion of junk

Sometimes associated with other symptoms too. Usually resolves itself but if associated with projectile vomiting after a drink or after eating, this could indicate a blockage and requires immediate veterinary care.

I always assess soft stools or diarrhea vis a vis the behavior of the dog/pup. If it is eating, drinking, playing normally then you are not in all likelihood dealing with an illness or a blockage but you should monitor to ensure the physical condition of the dog remains the same or gets better. If it deteriorates then you are into either an illness or a blockage or ingestion of something that is causing problems. Diarrhea past 24 hours with lethargy, with frank (red) blood (more than a trace), or with ongoing diarrhea needs veterinary

care.

Otherwise, my protocol is as follows:

I give 1 tsp of Pepto Bismal (5 c.c.s) per pup (must be the real Pepto not the knock off brands) 3 times 4-6 hours apart.

THEN

Add true yogurt (the kind the health food stores have) -- 1 tsp per puppy in their first and third meal of the day

OR

or acidophilis (open the capsule and add to food) (1/2 capsule per pup 2 x a day)

AS WELL

you can add a tsp of white boiled rice to each meal for a few days. This will bind them.

IN ADDITION:

have a stool sample tested for parasites and coccidia just to rule them out.

Hope this helps.

Karen

re-printed and published with permission of the author