

## RAISING ANATOLIAN PUPS, part one: BIRTH TO TWO WEEKS

My goal when raising Anatolian puppies is to create the best environment possible in order to optimize the genetics of each puppy in the litter. It is important to remember that each puppy is an individual, and what works with one puppy might not work with another.

I have had numerous litters over the last 37 years. With each litter I tend to modify and adjust my techniques based on what I've learned from previous litters, as well as based on the animals I have at the time that will help me raise and train working Anatolian pups.

About a week before an expectant female gives birth, I begin bringing her inside for short visits. Since all my dogs live with their goats and other charges 24/7, it is important that a new mother becomes relaxed inside before giving birth. I want her to be comfortable with the place I plan for her and her litter to live for the first two weeks or so after the pups are born. The weather in Texas is too unpredictable for me to trust that all will be well if the pups are outside, since pups can't regulate their own body temperature for a week or two after birth.

Anatolians chosen for breeding must have superior nurturing ability for correct behavior with the flock. As an extra benefit, having a dam with superior nurturing ability makes raising Anatolian pups much easier. Exemplary Anatolian mothers express their outstanding nurturing ability by remaining close to their pups and taking excellent care of them. During the pups' first week, the environment must be perfect so they can devote all their energy to feeding and sleeping. It's important for the pups to gain weight and become strong.

A highly nurturing mother makes the temperature of the room less important, because she is right there to help the newborns maintain the correct body temperature. If I owned an Anatolian that wanted to get away from her newborns, I'd never breed that Anatolian again. Luckily, I've never experienced that type of Anatolian.

My best mothers have puppies who rarely make noise because their mom keeps them comfortable. The moms keep their puppies quiet by providing abundant milk on demand, peeing and pooping their pups the moment they quietly whine, and maintaining a constant presence with her litter. When the dam is always present, the pups can either snuggle up against the mom for warmth or move away to stretch out and cool off. I usually have to drag my dams outside to pee and poop for the first few times after giving birth, because they are so devoted to their pups that they don't want to leave them for even a moment.

Since the pups are inside rather than on absorbent soil, I help by changing out the fabric the pups and their mom are on. This must be kept dry and clean. I change this material about three or four times a day. A correct fabric helps in a variety of ways. When the pup begins to stand and move, they need a fabric that helps them keep their feet under them. I select rather stiff material, like a heavy upholstery fabric. I don't allow the fabric to bunch

up. I don't want an exhausted mom to confuse a new pup for a bunched-up roll of fabric. She could continue to lay on the pup and smother it. I also monitor the room temperature, which I maintain at about 72 degrees Fahrenheit. That's something I can easily control. And I don't allow drafts to move across the puppy area, as a draft can chill a young pup.

When the mother is nurturing and the environment is correct, the first two weeks tend to be quiet and uneventful. An uneventful beginning is exactly what I want!

However, quiet or noisy, you need to check the dam's teats daily, especially the first week. If they are swollen, hot, hard, or red, it is most likely mastitis, an infection of the milk gland. When the pups are feeding from all the teats, this isn't something one expects. However, the moment you see signs of mastitis, call your vet. It might be so far along that the pups can't fix the problem by nursing off that teat. If that's the case, you'll need to give an antibiotic, and you need to massage and drain the teat yourself.

An infection can create problems when everything else is perfect. Puppy poop should be relatively firm and have a mild smell. If you notice a pup's poop becomes airy and very smelly, don't delay. Take a sample to your vet for analysis immediately! It might be coccidiosis. The only FDA-approved treatment for coccidia is sulfadimethoxine, which must be prescribed by a veterinarian. My vet prescribes Albon (containing sulfadimethoxine), a sweet-smelling and tasty Anatolian Shepherd Dog dam Lucky Hit DivaKiz Sonra, with her first litter. For her entire life, Sonra worked full time guarding sheep and/or goats and poultry 24/7. Three of these pups went on to become AKC champions. If all is well, the litter's first two weeks look pretty much like this scene, with lots of sleep because the pups are clean and quiet, well fed, and comfortable. AKC GAZETTE 53 OCTOBER 2022 WORKING GROUP AKC GAZETTE COLLECTION medicine that cures this problem quickly. If one pup has coccidiosis, they'll eventually all get it, so I don't wait; I give the entire litter the medicine (and my vet concurs). I've only experienced pups getting coccidiosis during the first week after birth, although they can get it at any time.

Another dangerous infection in puppies can be caused by giardia, a single-celled parasite. It can cause severe diarrhea (watery, soft, foul smelling, and greasy with excessive mucus) and frequent urges to poop. It may be fatal if left untreated. Fenbendazole is an effective medication and is the active ingredient in Safe-guard. If left untreated, giardia can lead to bloody diarrhea, weight loss, dehydration, and even death.

Don't be alarmed if a small amount of blood is being discharged by the dam after the birthing. This discharge lasts between two and eight weeks. However, if the dam seems to be weakening and the discharge is excessive, immediately take her to the vet! Also, the dam might develop diarrhea from cleaning up the afterbirth, cleaning up her discharge, and cleaning up after the pups. If the diarrhea doesn't clear up quickly, call your vet! This series on "Raising Anatolian Pups" will continue in the January 2023 issue. —Erick Conard, Lucky Hit Ranch,