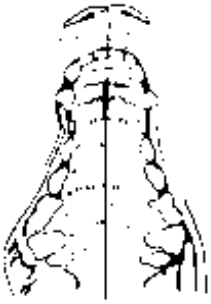
Cleft Palate in Puppies

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



Cleft palate is a skeletal disorder occasionally seen in puppies of all breeds. A cleft palate results when the bones forming the roof of the mouth do not grow normally. This results in an opening in the roof of the mouth that communicates with the nasal cavity.

What are the symptoms?

Puppies as young as one day old will often have milk come out their noses as they nurse. They may also inhale milk into their lungs, causing a difficulty in breathing or even pneumonia. When the puppy's mouth is examined, a slit will be seen in the roof of the mouth.

What are the risks?

The milk tends to enter the nasal passages and lungs. Most puppies will die at an early age from pneumonia and/or malnourishment.

What is the management?

Mild openings in the mouth roof can be surgically corrected. More severe instances cannot. Frequently, if the cleft palate cannot be surgically closed, euthanasia is advised.

*Unauthorized use of any images, thumbnails, illustrations, descriptions, article content, or registered trademarks of **Foster & Smith, Inc.** is strictly prohibited under copyright law. Site content, including photography, descriptions, pricing, promotions, and availability are subject to change without notice. These restrictions are necessary in order to protect not only our copyrighted intellectual property, but also the health of pets, since articles or images that are altered or edited after download could result in misinformation that may harm companion animals, aquatic life, or native species.*