**Care of Neonates**

**Standard Operating Procedure**

**First ten days of life:**

* All neonates are to be hospitalised in isolation.
* Vetbeds and blankets should be used for bedding, ensuring the kennel is made safe and secure.
* Provide a heat source (Bair hugger, heatpad, Snugglesafe).
* Environmental temperature should be 30c for the first 24hrs, then reduced to 26c.
* The environment should be draught free; provide a box for protection if needed.
* Neonates should receive colostrum from the dam as soon as possible, otherwise feed with a milk replacer (Welpi for puppies, Cimicat for kittens) and follow manufacturer’s recommendations for feeding.
* Neonates need to be toileted by rubbing the perineum gently with damp cotton wool to stimulate urination and defecation.
* The kennel should be kept clean and all organic matter cleaned up immediately and any newspaper or bedding should be replaced.

**During a caesarian**

* Prepare a warm small animal recovery box with a heat source, a Vetbed and a blanket.
* Remove the birthing sack away from the neonate’s head and body.
* Check for vital signs – MM, RR, HR.
* Check for any congenital defects or abnormalities (cleft palate, hare lip, no anus).
* Vigorously rub the neonate using a towel to dry and stimulate circulation and respiration.
* Check the neonate’s mouth, remove any mucous and fluid.
* Hold the neonate in the palm of your hand, supporting the neck and head with your first 2 fingers.
* Tilt the neonate forward to help remove any fluid from the respiratory tract.
* The heart beat should be palpated in the thorax using your thumb and forefinger. If the heart rate cannot be palpated, help stimulate the heart by using your thumb and forefinger to massage the thorax. Neonate’s heart rate is around 200bpm.
* Once the neonate is breathing by itself and starting to wake up, suture material can be used to ligate the umbilical cord and trim the cord distal to the ligature.
* Place the neonate in the recovery box.
* Regularly check the neonates for any problems.
* Encourage the neonates to feed from the mother before she makes a full recovery from the anaesthetic, so she can then recover in peace.
* Closely monitor mother and neonates throughout the recovery.

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