

### ***How do you deal with small or weak puppies?***

Nancy: We're usually very successful with the small ones because I'm adept at tube-feeding. And rather than using Esbilac, I use a milk substitute called Puppy Bac from Nature's Farmacy ([www.naturesfarmacy.com](http://www.naturesfarmacy.com)). I've had very good results with it. It's a powdered milk that you reconstitute with water. The Farmacy also has a fading puppy powder called Fading Puppy Support and Colostrum, which I also find very effective.

Liz: We had a litter last fall that was several days premature and teeny tiny. Two males were about three ounces at birth and the two females were just about two to two-and-a-half ounces. We lost the smallest female after a



*Born several days premature and only 2 1/2 ounces, Cindahope Whistlin' Dixie has come a long way since the whelping*

few days, but the other little female came along with some help from us and is now very healthy and cute as a button. Size-wise, one male looks to be going oversized and has since gone to a pet home, but the other male and female show promise and should be well in-size.

Nancy: If we hadn't put in the time and care we might have lost all of those puppies. Liz and I had many sleepless nights watching them—me tube-feeding and Liz often lying on the floor, half in the whelping box, holding puppies to support them while they nursed. Dick and Rich also helped to watch over the mother and newborns when we couldn't be there.

Liz: It was two straight weeks of just hanging over them like that, including Thanksgiving dinner. I sat by the whelping box while everyone else had dinner. Then the first person to finish dinner came and took over my spot while I went to eat at the table.

In the beginning, they were so tiny they had a hard time staying on for long without help, and their mom was a bit overdoting, often washing them to the point of knocking them off the nipple as soon as they'd started nursing. On top of that, she didn't seem to have very much milk, so we ended up supplementing them by using a bitch who'd had a litter a few weeks before.

Nancy: The males seemed to be getting enough, but the little girl was having a tougher time. She nursed strongly and didn't seem to be fading at any point, but she would either fall off the nipple when someone wasn't there to hold her or get pushed off by her littermates. I knew she wasn't getting enough and that it would be only a matter of time before she'd start going downhill if I didn't give her some help. I tube-fed her with the fading puppy formula as well as the regular formula, starting out with just a half a cc, then worked up to one cc per feeding every two hours, and then every three hours, until she was nursing full time on her own. We weighed them twice daily with a digital

kitchen scale that shows percents of ounces. I never used one before and it worked great. I could see each small increment they gained.

### ***How and when are puppies weaned?***

Nancy: I usually start the weaning process between three and four weeks. A spoonful or two of the Farmacy Puppy Bac formula works great mixed in with softened Eukanuba Small-Breed Puppy kibble. But I don't baby them for long on the soft foods. By seven to eight weeks I've reduced the amount of liquid until they are eating dry food. For the next few weeks, I add a sprinkle of the Puppy Bac on the dry food for more nourishment.

### ***How do you socialize your puppies?***

Dick: We socialize our puppies constantly because we are retired now and home just about all the time. The puppies are raised in our new living room where there is continual coming and going and the usual household noise and activity.

Nancy: Once they get old enough and the weather is more tolerable for us, we take them with us in the motor home to shows to get them used to traveling and being in different surroundings. We set up an ex-pen just outside the door of the motor home and let them play and interact with the people passing by.

### ***When do you evaluate your puppies?***

Nancy: We are evaluating our puppies constantly from birth on. We discuss what we are seeing with each other all the time. We weigh and measure. We play with them and watch dispositions develop. We tape ears if it becomes necessary. I think you can see the movement and structure pretty well by five months. I think you can evaluate head quality really well after the teeth have come in.

### ***How do you condition and train a dog for the show ring?***

Dick: We generally let our handlers make the fine conditioning adjustments necessary for our dogs, either for grooming or deciding on additional diet supplements. We just make sure they are in good physical condition, which they always are, thanks to the layout of our exercise yards and an acre of fenced-in space to run in. We feel that having plenty of space to run, both for puppies and adults, helps to develop and maintain good movement.

Liz: With our most recent litters, I have been doing puppy kindergarten with the puppies we are growing out as show prospects. As soon as the snow and ice melt, I will start them on some puppy Agility in the yard for confidence and fun, as well as more leash training. When they are a little older they'll go to breed handling drop-in classes and matches when possible to prepare for the show ring.

### ***What sort of advice would you give a novice breeder?***

Nancy: I realized early on that it was very important to breed quality Shelties. I had a theory that dams and sires should be equally important in a program. If as many of the dams as possible in the tail-dam line are champions, it gives you a yardstick to go by (in other words, they were good enough to finish). That kind of quality is essential to keep a strong bitch line going that can be maintained generation after generation. Poor-quality