



Breeders' Edge® What to do if your Female Won't Milk or Won't Dry Up

By: **Revival**
ANIMAL HEALTH

When mothers won't milk, it's critical - but quick intervention can be the remedy.

Prolactin is the hormonal stimulant for lactation. Reglan (Metoclopramide) causes the release of prolactin in the post partum bitch. Reglan is mostly used to stop vomiting, so it's readily available. You can give Reglan at 0.5 mg/kg every 6 hours for three days with Oxytocin every 2 hours to help get lactation started. Prolactin encourages the gland to produce milk and the Oxytocin lets the milk out of the gland into the duct, which allows for more milk production. Results are usually rewarding within 24 hours.

Fenugreek is an herbal product that's used to boost milk production. Fenugreek is often combined with Blood Thistle, which increases blood flow to the mammary glands. Use 3 capsules per day (large dog) or if it's in another form, use about 1/2 of the human recommendation, sizing down for small dogs. You can expect increased production within 72 hours. This has been effective at increasing milk production, but if there was no milk, I would use the Reglan as well.

To bring a mother's milk in, beer has long been the human treatment. The malt in the beer will bring a mother's milk in quickly – usually within 24 hours. Use 100cc twice a day on large dogs for best results.

When you're dealing with milk production issues, keep in mind that the puppies still need nutrients! If you can't bring the milk in right away, you have to bottle feed with milk replacers every 2 hours. As the bitch produces more milk, you can transition the puppies back to their mother.

Too much milk or won't dry up. Most bitches slowly wean as the puppies move to solid food and the gland responds to the back pressure by producing less milk. Taking the bitch away is not an issue - she dries up and the glands suck up against the body again. However, in heavy milkers, it can sometimes be difficult to dry them up.

Glands that won't stop producing become painful and if we are not careful, mastitis sets in.

In severe cases, prescription drug therapy (Cabergoline 1.5-5.0 µg/kg/day divided BID) may be indicated to reduce lactation. Cabergoline will block prolactin in order to stop milk production.

A topical mustard plaster has always been successful for me. Mustard plaster is an old remedy used in humans, and it works well for dogs too.

Mustard plaster:

- 1 T. flour
- 2 tsp. oil
- T. dry mustard

Cover the area with a thin coat of Vaseline jelly before applying the mustard plaster. Mix the ingredients with lukewarm water to form a paste. Spread on a thin clean cloth and cover the mammary glands. Place on the area for 20 minutes, or a shorter time if needed. Be careful not to burn the skin - check the application every 5 minutes. Remove the plaster and cover the area with camphorated oil. Then cover with warm fabric such as flannel or a towel. Repeat in 4 hours.

At the same time that you're using the mustard plaster, take the bitch off food and limit her water for the first 24 hours. Then give her 1/2 amount of her regular food for the next 2 days before returning to a full diet. You may need to milk her out by hand, but only when it's needed to prevent infection from setting in. It's also wise to put them on an antibiotic, such as sulfamethoxazole trimethoprim, to prevent mastitis during this process. Three treatments should dry them up, but I have gone as many as five since it is soothing to the bitch.

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