

Title: Early Neurological Stimulation (ENS): A Guide for Puppy Breeders and Owners

Boosting Resilience, Stress Tolerance, and Development in Newborn Puppies By Wendi Coffman-Porter | furpower.org | @WCoffmanPorter on X March 2026

What is Early Neurological Stimulation (ENS)?

Early Neurological Stimulation (ENS), originally developed as part of the U.S. Military's "Bio Sensor" program (later popularized as the "Super Dog" Program), involves gentle, brief exercises performed on newborn puppies during a critical window of rapid neurological growth.

Research from military canine programs and breeders (including Dr. Carmen Battaglia) shows that these mild stressors—applied for just seconds daily—can lead to long-term benefits like:

- Improved cardiovascular performance (stronger heart rate/beat)
- Stronger adrenal glands
- Greater tolerance to stress
- Enhanced disease resistance
- Better problem-solving and learning ability
- More active, exploratory behavior

These effects stem from stimulating the puppy's endocrine and nervous systems during days 3–16, when the brain and body are highly plastic. ENS is **not** a replacement for daily gentle handling, socialization, or maternal care—it's an **addition** for potential edge in high-drive breeds like German Shepherds.

Important Notes:

- ENS is time-sensitive: Only days 3 through 16 after birth.
- Perform **once per day** per puppy—overdoing it (more frequent/longer sessions) can cause stress instead of benefits.
- Keep sessions short (total ~30–60 seconds per pup).
- Monitor for distress: Stop immediately if a puppy shows excessive crying, lethargy, or avoidance.

- Always return pups quickly to mom/litter for warmth and bonding (they can't regulate temperature yet).
- Scientific evidence is promising but mixed—some studies show benefits in exploration/socialization, while others find variable results. It's widely used by breeders of working dogs.

When and How to Perform ENS

- **Timing:** Start on **Day 3** after birth; continue daily through **Day 16** (14 days total).
- **Frequency:** Once daily, ideally at the same time (e.g., morning after nursing).
- **Setup:** Warm, quiet area. Have a Q-tip (cotton swab) and a cool, damp towel (refrigerated 5+ minutes) ready.
- **Process:** Handle one puppy at a time. Complete all five exercises in order before moving to the next. Each exercise lasts **3–5 seconds** only.
- **Total time per litter:** Quick—under 5–10 minutes for 6 pups.

The Five Standard ENS Exercises

(Perform in this order; handler uses gentle, steady hands—no rough handling.)

1. **Tactile Stimulation (Tickling Between Toes)** Hold the puppy securely in one hand. Gently "tickle" or stroke between the toes/pads on **one foot** using a Q-tip or fingertip. No need for the pup to visibly react—it's about subtle neural input. (3–5 seconds)
2. **Head Held Erect** Using both hands, hold the puppy perpendicular to the ground (vertical), with head directly above tail (upright position). Support the body fully. (3–5 seconds)
3. **Head Pointed Down** Using both hands, hold the puppy perpendicular but inverted: tail above head (head down). Again, full support—no dangling. (3–5 seconds)
4. **Supine Position (On Back)** Rest the puppy on its back in the palms of both hands, nose pointed toward the ceiling (belly up). Let it relax or gently squirm—don't force stillness. (3–5 seconds)
5. **Thermal Stimulation (Cool Towel)** Place a pre-chilled, damp towel flat on a surface. Set the puppy on all fours (feet down) on the towel—**do not restrain** movement. Let it feel the cool sensation briefly. Return to warmth immediately. (3–5 seconds)

Tips for Success and Safety

- Keep pups warm: ENS briefly removes them from litter heat—minimize time away (return right after).
- Be gentle: These are mild stressors, not punishments. Positive, calm energy helps.
- Combine with your routine: After ENS, do quick health checks (weight, nursing, warmth).
- For working lines (like our DDR x American GSD litter): This fits perfectly with building confident, resilient dogs for veteran companions or service roles.
- Consult a vet: If pups show any issues (e.g., chilling easily), pause and check health.
- Track progress: Note any early differences in alertness or confidence as they grow.

Why We're Using ENS on Our Litter

At fурpowerr.org, we're raising these six German Shepherd puppies (born March 2026) with purpose: to become loyal companions or service dogs for veterans. ENS is one tool in our daily training/socialization plan—starting gentle neurological boosts early to help them handle stress, bond deeply, and thrive in real-world challenges. These pups aren't for sale; they're mission-driven placements.

Questions? Reach out on X (@WCoffmanPorter). Follow for updates on their growth and how ENS plays into their development!

With gratitude for the warriors we serve, Wendi Coffman-Porter fурpowerr.org