

EMERGENCY SQUIRREL CARE INSTRUCTIONS

(adapted from information found at squirrel-rehab.org)

The information contained herein is not designed to take the place of a wildlife rehabilitator or a veterinarian BUT is designed to give you some guidance in what you can do to help the baby squirrel(s) you have found until you can reach a rehabilitator. Make sure you read this entire page first before attempting to do anything as there is a lot of information here and it is all very important. Before doing anything, get on the phone and try to find a rehabilitator.

Get The Baby Warm

Before trying to give the young squirrel anything to eat, you must first get him warm. Make sure that you warm him slowly and make sure you monitor his warming so as not to overheat him. The normal temperature for a squirrel is 99 degrees, which is close to that of our own temperature of 98.6 degrees.

Place the squirrel in a cardboard box or cat carrier with a clean cloth in the bottom (preferably a cloth baby diaper or baby receiving blanket, NO TOWELS) and place a light cover over the squirrel. The reason I say "no towels" is the squirrels will get their toenails hung in the loops and either rip out a toenail, break a toe, or break a foot trying to get loose.

Put a heating pad under one half of the box with a towel folded twice between the box and the heating pad. If the squirrel is unable to move on his own, you will need to monitor the temperature of the squirrel very closely so he does not overheat. When he is warmed up, he should feel warm to your touch

Rehydration

Feeding babies the wrong way, such as with a kitten baby bottle, can cause them to aspirate liquid into their lungs, a potentially fatal condition. Do not attempt to give the squirrel anything unless you are unable to find a rehabilitator within a few hours. Better to let a healthy squirrel go hungry for a few hours than to risk aspirating them. A healthy squirrel will be alert and squirmy and have a rounded belly. A lethargic, thin or emaciated squirrel will need attention sooner.

Before feeding the baby anything, they must be rehydrated first. To feed the squirrel full strength formula without rehydrating it first can kill the baby. We give orphans rehydrating solution only for their first three feedings.

You can use Pedialyte, lactated ringers solution or this homemade solution:

- 1/3 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon regular table sugar
- 1 cup warm water

The squirrel and the rehydrating solution must be warm. Use an eyedropper or syringe to slowly introduce solution into the mouth. DO NOT USE A PET NURSER, the babies will drink too fast and get formula in their lungs and get pneumonia or literally drown. They should get 5% of their body weight at each feeding. Feed the rehydrating solution every two hours for three feedings. If you need to keep the squirrel longer than this you will need more detailed instructions from a rehabilitator.

Young squirrels who do not have their eyes open will need help in eliminating their waste. After each feeding gently stroke their genital and anal area with a Kleenex for about 60 seconds.

Even with a syringe, you need to be very careful when feeding the baby squirrels, they can suck so hard that they will get the solution into their lungs. If the solution starts to come out of the nose, immediately stop feeding and dab the nose with a tissue to absorb any liquid that comes out of his nose or mouth. If you should notice a faint clicking when he breathes or any difficulty breathing, you should contact a veterinarian immediately. He may need to be put on antibiotics for pneumonia. Also listen and watch for the symptoms when you first receive a squirrel. They can also get pneumonia from the exposure of laying in the cold until they are found. If these respiratory problems are treated in the early stages with antibiotics, they can be cleared up.