Care for Orphaned Chipmunks

Is This Chipmunk Truly Orphaned?

If the baby chipmunk is **consistently out of the burrow, is easy to catch, if there is no sign of mom, and/or if it is extremely thin, likely it needs help.** If you think mom is still around, it is worth trying to reunite them. Even if you have touched the animal, mom will take it back if she can help. She may come and then leave, but come back for it in a few hours. To **reunite, leave the baby in the exact spot** where found (mom won't know to go look anywhere else). You can place a hot water bottle (wrapped in a towel) under it for warmth. (Do not cover the animal with any materials; leave in plain view, otherwise mom won't be able to find it). Monitor from inside. **Try only during daylight**. If after several hours mom does not at least come to see the chipmunk then it needs help.

Raising a Single Chipmunk

If you determine that the chipmunk is orphaned, it will have littermates that also need help so continue to check the area frequently for up to a week. **Handling of the chipmunk should be minimal**, give toys to stimulate, keep confined (i.e. in a cage), and **do not treat as a pet**. It is illegal to keep as a pet plus it wouldn't make a good pet, as it's a wild animal.

Aging the Chipmunk

In order to properly care for the baby you have found, it is important to know its age. Consult the chart at the bottom of the page to assess age

Feeding

Required Formulas/Tools

- Pedialyte
- Esbilac Powder
- 1cc/ml oral syringe

Orphans that have been without their mother will be **suffering from chill and dehydration**. They must be thoroughly warmed first, and then offered warmed rehydration solution. **Pedialyte** is a rehydration solution available in drug stores-it should be heated to body temperature and offered every 2 hours for the first several feedings using a **1cc/ml oral syringe**. Feed the baby chipmunk **esbilac powder**, mix only enough for 24hrs and keep it refrigerated. Esbilac is a puppy milk replacer, which you should be able to purchase at a vet or pet store. Human baby pablums, cows milk, and most pet products (except Esbilac) are **not suitable** and will likely cause death. Use a 1cc oral syringe (try a vet or pharmacy), warm the formula, and hold the chipmunk in a towel, firmly, and covering its eyes. **CAUTION:** The chipmunk will suck very quickly and take too much formula if you are not in total control. If this happens the chipmunk will sneeze formula out of its nose. **STOP** feeding, turn upside down, gently rub its back, and gently wipe the excess formula from its nose. Repeat this for about 5 minutes or until the sneezing stops and breathing returns to normal. If severe this can cause immediate death or pneumonia on a long-term basis. This is why **bottles are not suitable to use**. To avoid this from occurring feed in a quiet room, go slowly and watch both the chipmunk and the syringe, if air bubbles appear in the syringe, stop feeding and expel the air, (see chart at the bottom of the page for feeding schedule).

Once feeding is finished, **wash** its face well with a damp face cloth as formula dries quickly and causes fur loss.

It is **very critical that baby chipmunks are stimulated to urinate before and after every feed.** The chipmunk may be doing it a bit on its own but this may be overflow and if not stimulated the bladder will rupture. To stimulate a baby chipmunk hold it over a face cloth. Dip either your finger or a Q-tip in warm water and then light feathery strokes over its genital area will cause the chipmunk to urinate and/or have a bowel movement. Once the chipmunk starts to pee don't stop as the chipmunk will then stop.

Housing

Housing requirements will change as the chipmunk grows and develops, see chart at the bottom of the page for details.

Release

The chipmunks will not be ready to be released until they are around **9-10 weeks old**. It is ideal for the chipmunks to spend a couple of weeks in their large cage (2ft x 4ft and 4ft high, made of 1/2" welded wire mesh), with a nesting box (1ft x 1ft) on the floor of the cage, in a secure garage or shed. Avoid wood chips, they are not good insulation and release aromatic oils that are hard on chipmunk respiration. Doors and windows in the shed can be left open as long as there is someone to monitor to keep animals out (even if other animals such as raccoons cannot get into the cage, their attempt to get in will cause the chipmunks to die of stress), before dark the doors should be closed. They should be in the shed on the property where they will be released. Before releasing it is important to investigate the area, if there are neighbours trapping or harming chipmunks, they should not be released there. **Check the forecast to be sure there will be at least 2-3 days of dry weather after the chipmunks are released.** When the chipmunks have become acclimatized, the nesting box can now be used as a release box. Provide natural nesting materials in the box such as dry leaves and grass. Return to the site daily to provide food so that the chipmunks can adapt more easily. The release site should be a wooded area with plenty of natural vegetation, rock outcroppings, large trees with well-developed root systems for burrowing, an accessible water source, and an area where chipmunks are known to live. Since transitional care is required, the chipmunks must be released on private property, where caregivers are present.

****In some jurisdictions it is illegal to care for wild animals and you should consult your government wildlife agency.**