STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT AND CARE GUIDE

FOR RED SQUIRRELS

BASED ON EXPERIENCE OF WILDLIFE REHABILITATORS

IN THE NORTHERN UNITED STATES AND CANADA

Weights for young at the same stage of development will vary not only between individuals but across regions as well. Therefore it is best to decide how much formula to feed based on individual weights using this chart as a general guide only.

AGE (weeks)	FORMULA FEEDING	HOUSING	SPECIAL CARE
Birth to 1 week - Pink with no fur - Eyes tightly closed - Dark stripe on nose	- Feed 0.4-0.5cc/ml per feeding - 8 times a day: every 2.5 hours (including overnight Ex: feeding at 7am, 9:30am, noon, 2:30 pm, 5pm, 7:30pm, 10pm, and once overnight Notes: - formula should be kept a bit warmer than body temperature as it cools down quickly - 1 cup of formula placed into a 2 cup measuring container partially filled with hot water and covered with a cloth will keep formula warm	First Housing: - Keep baby squirrels in a warm secure room - small enclosed box with breathing holes - create a cozy nest with several layers of non-ravelling cloth -change bedding twice a day, wash **without** fabric softener or scents -avoid wood chips for bedding External heat: -set the box enclosure half-on half-off a heating pad set to low OR put a hot water bottle well wrapped in cloth in the box -refill hot water bottle every other feeding or when cooled	-keep small babies warm during feeding sessions by cupping them in a small cloth, resting the hand holding them on top of a hot water bottle -feed in a quiet room with no distractions -at each feeding gently stroke genital area with a wet: finger, Q-tip, tissue, or soft cloth until they finish peeing and/or defecating -thoroughly wash their face, neck and chin after each feeding
2 Weeks -pink	-feed 1-1.5cc per feeding -feed 6 times a day,	SAME AS ABOVE	SAME AS ABOVE

-scant fuzz of fur, no fur on belly -eyes closed	every 3 hours Ex: feeding at 7am, 10am, 1pm, 4pm, 7pm, 10pm		
3 Weeks -thin fur all over -eyes closed -lower front teeth (incisors) erupt around 3 weeks	-feed 1.75-2cc per feeding -feed 6 times a day every 3 hours Ex: feed at 7am, 10am, 1pm, 4pm, 7pm, 10pm	SAME AS ABOVE	SAME AS ABOVE
4 Weeks - fur all over -eyes open around 4 weeks	-feed 2-2.5 cc or more per feeding -feed 5 times a day every 3.5 hours Ex: feed at 7am, 10:30am, 2pm, 5:30pm, 9pm -after eyes open put a few pieces of rodent block (like "Mazuri" or "Kaytee") in their nest with them -if rodent block is introduced as a teething food before other solids they will accept it as a diet staple	SAME AS ABOVE Note: -after eyes open, they are escape wizards, so make such the room is very secure, especially when out of housing for feeding -if you have more than two babies than two babies, it's good to have two housing set-ups until they are weaned. At feedings pick up each baby, feed it and transfer it to the other housing – this will help you avoid escapes and also allow you to keep track of who is fed.	SAME AS ABOVE Note: -As babies become more aware with open eyes it is especially important to feed them in a quiet room with no distractions -Try wearing light little cotton gloves you can find in drug stores to pick red babies up with and hold them for feedings, covering their eyes over with your index finger. Allow the gloves to retain their scent between feedings. Scent is extremely important to baby squirrels, and their own scent is reassuring to them. -Covering their eyes will often reduce their stress and allow them

			to nurse better. Feedings should be a smooth, gentle, unrushed experience for the baby and rescuer both.
5 Weeks -fur all over, thinner fur on underside -upper front teeth (incisors) erupt around 4-6 weeks -cannot yet curl tail	-feed 3-4cc or more per feeding -feed 4 times a day every 4 hours Ex: feed at 7am, 11am, 3pm, 7pm continue to provide rodent block and add two new elements to their housing: -a drinking water bottle -a small mammal mineral stone	INTERMEDIATE HOUSING -continue to keep squirrels in a warm quiet room -provide them with both space to play and exercise, for example a large dog-size pet carrier (26”x15”x17”high) -place a towel in the bottom -make sure there is room for hanging water bottle, food at the front, and more soft bedding in the back for them to hide and sleep under -dog carrier door will likely have mesh that squirrels can escape from, so cut a piece of window screening and attach over the door -start to gradually remove their supplemental heat source (unless a single baby OR they are not well) -change bedding and clean carrier daily	-rodent block if crucial to the squirrels good health, and they need to eat this staple once they are weaned to maintain nutrition, so make sure they have a taste for it before introducing other solids -after the squirrels are chewing the rodent block, other teething methods should be provided, and replaced daily Ex: hardwood branches and twigs, cedar boughs with seeds, pine boughs with pinecones
6 Weeks -furry	-feed as much as they want within reason each feeding	SAME AS ABOVE	SAME AS ABOVE

-eyes fully open -upper front teeth (incisors erupt around 4-6 weeks -cheek teeth erupt around 6 weeks -can sit up -can curl tail	-feed 4 times a day every 4 hours Ex: feed 7am, 11am, 3pm, 7pm -add large striped unsealed sunflower seeds (NOT small oiled black ones) and a few pine nuts to the dish of rodent block -add a separate dish of chopped fruits such as apple, grape, banana, avocado, melon, berries, etc.		
7-8 Weeks -furry all over, including underside of tail -tail bushier -can sit up and hold food in front paws -sleeping less, more active	Weaning: -continue to offer all they want at each feeding -7 weeks: reduce formula feedings to 3 times a day Ex: 8am, 1pm, 6pm -8 weeks: reduce to 2 times a day Ex: 8am, 6pm Solid foods: -50%: rodent block -50%: sunflower seeds, nuts, a dish of fruit, and vegetables such as yam, broccoli, carrot, beans, spinach, snow peas, cucumber, etc.	SAME AS ABOVE	SAME AS ABOVE
8-12 Weeks -long fur -bushy tail -increasingly active	Weaning is usually complete by 9-10 weeks of age -they will typically self wean as they eat more solids, but continue to give a	PRE-RELEASE LARGE CAGE -at about 8 weeks move squirrels to a large pre release cage in a secure shed or garage	-furnish the cage with fresh hardwood branches with leaves, cedar boughs with seeds, pine boughs with pinecones, and as many other natural

-can climb well -by 11-12 weeks of age the youngsters are ¾ of adult size and ready for release	little formula if they want it -offer a free voice of rodent block and other foods as listed above	-at least 4ft x2ft x4ft high -made of welded wire mesh -provide a wooden nest box 10”x10” -place a large piece of plywood on the inside floor of the cage to place their dishes on so that food does not fall through the wire -cage must be cleaned daily -place a plastic tarp under the cage with an old sheet on top to catch debris, change sheet once or twice a week	elements as you can gather, such as acorns, maple seed keys, pine cones, flower seed heads, bark, mosses, etc. -put a big hardwood stump or large log of hardwood in the bottom of the cage
12+ Weeks	- some squirrels will disappear for several days to a week or two after they are first released as they explore their new world -be sure to continue stocking a feeding station every day even if you do not see them since they need your support -provide their food within sight but some distance from the nest box as the food might attract other animals	POST RELEASE - A good staple to provide your squirrels post-release is large, striped, unsalted sunflower seeds. -You can also give them hard shell nuts like almonds, pecans, hazelnuts or walnuts for them to bury for a back-up supply of food. -To make sure they have fresh water (until they scout their own source) is to nail a yoghurt container onto the trunk of the tree holding their nest box, low enough for you to refill it daily.	-For spring youngsters, released in the summer, provide food and water for at least 4 weeks post-release. -For those released in the fall, please continue to feed all winter since they will not have had the time to collect and store food for the winter.