STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT AND CARE GUIDE

FOR EASTERN GREY SQUIRRELS

BASED ON EXPERIENCE OF WILDLIFE REHABILITATORS

IN THE NORTHERN UNITED STATES AND CANADA

There is a geographic difference in size for Eastern grey squirrels in North America. Body mass increases as you go further north, so young born in the north will likely be bigger on average than those born further south – although features of each age (for example time when eyes open, or teeth erupt) will be the same. This chart is based on the experience of wildlife rehabilitators at the northern edge of Eastern grey squirrel habitat. Some internet sites indicate a baby Eastern grey squirrel will weight 13-18 grams at birth and about 90 grams when its eyes open at 4 weeks of age – whereas the experience of rehabilitators further north found that young just opening their eyes averaged 120-135 grams, and newborns weighed 20-25 grams in the birth to 1 week age range. Weights for young at the same stage of development will thus 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 - 3 inches long excluding tail - pink, no fur - eyes tightly closed	Feed 0.75-1.25cc or ml per feeding 8 times a day every 2.5 hours including overnight feeding **Example of a feeding schedule for 8X a day:** 7am, 9:30am, noon, 2:30pm, 5pm, 7:30pm, 10pm, plus once overnight Formula should be kept warmer than body temperature. Formula cup placed in a larger cup containing	**FIRST HOUSING** House in a small enclosed box with breathing holes in a warm room. Create nest within box with layers of soft, non-raveling cloth. Change bedding twice a day. Do not use fabric softener when washing it (harms respiratory system). Do not use wood chips for bedding. Use heating pad (only set under half the box) or a well wrapped hot water	Cup with small cloth and rest your hand overtop of a hot water bottle to keep warm during feeding. Feed in a quiet and warm room with no distractions. Stimulate after feeding - Stroke genital area with wet finger, Q-tip, or soft wet cloth until finished peeing or defecating Wash face, neck, and

	warm water to keep it warm. Place small cloth over it to keep it warm.	bottle placed in the box to use as a heat source. Make sure hot water bottle does not leak, and refill every second feeding.	chin after each feeding.
2 weeks - pink, scant fuzz of fur - no fur on belly - eyes closed	Feed 2.5 – 3cc or ml per feeding 6 times a day every 3 hours **Example of a feeding schedule for 6X a day:** 7am, 10am, 1pm, 4pm, 7pm, 10pm	Same as above	Same as above
3 weeks - 4 inches long excluding tail, thin fur all over - eyes closed - lower front teeth (incisors) erupt at about 3 weeks of age (19 – 21 days)	Feed 4 – 5.5cc or ml per feeding 6 times a day every 3 hours **Example of a feeding schedule for 6X a day:** 7am, 10am, 1pm, 4pm, 7pm, 10pm	Same as above	Same as above
4 weeks - 5 inches long excluding tail, fur all over - **eyes open at about 4 weeks (27-30 days old)**	Feed 6 – 9cc or ml or more per feeding 5 times a day every 3.5 hours **Example of a feeding schedule for 5X a day:** 7am, 10:30am, 2pm, 5:30pm, 9pm After eyes open, put a	Same as above	Same as above Note: As they become more aware and open their eyes, it is important to continue to feed them in a quiet room with no distractions. Wrapping them snugly

	few pieces of rodent block (such as “Mazuri” or “Kaytee”) in their nest. If rodent block is introduced as a first teething food before other solids, they will learn to eat it, and accept it as a staple of their diet.		in a soft cloth with their eyes covered will often reduce their stress and allow them to nurse better. Feedings should be a smooth, gentle, unrushed experience.
5 weeks - 6 inches long excluding tail, fur all over, thinner fur on underside - upper front teeth (incisors) erupt at 4-6 weeks of age - cannot yet curl tail	Feed 10 – 12cc or ml or more per feeding 4 times a day every 4 hours **Example of a feeding schedule for 4X a day:** 7am, 11am, 3pm, 7pm Continue providing rodent block and add: - Drinking water bottle - Small mammal mineral stone	**INTERMEDIATE HOUSING** House them in a quiet, warm room, but allow for more space for play/exercise - Can use lare dog sized pet carrier (26”x15”x17”high) with a towel on the bottom and enough room for their water bottle and food at front. Add bedding at back (will give sense of security). Gradually remove their artificial heat source (unless it’s a single baby or they are not well) Change bedding and clean carrier daily.	Rodent block is crucial for good health. Required to eat after weaned to maintain nutrition (try not to introduce solids until they get a taste for it) After rodent block is introduced, add other teething materials - Hardwood branches and twigs (replace daily)

6 weeks - Furry - eyes fully open - cheek teeth erupt at about 6 weeks of age - can sit up - can curl tail	Feed 12 - 14cc or ml or more per feeding 4 times a day every 4 hours **Example of a feeding schedule for 4X a day:** 7am, 11am, 3pm, 7pm **Add large striped unsalted sunflower seeds not the small oiled black sunflower seeds, to the dish of rodent block and a separate dish of chopped fruit (apple, grape, banana, avocado, melon, berries, etc.)**	Same as above	Same as above
7 - 8 weeks - 7 -8 inches long, furry all over including underside of tail - tail bushier - can sit up and hold food in front paws - sleeping less, more active	Begin weaning at 7 weeks by reducing formula feedings to **3 times a day** and then at 8 weeks reduce to **2 times a day**, offering all they want (within reason!) at each feeding. **Example of a feeding schedule for 3X a day:** 8am, 1pm, 6pm **Example of a feeding schedule for 2X a day:** 8am, 6pm Solid foods should now consist of about 50% rodent block and 50%	Same as above	Same as above

	other foods such as: - large striped sunflower seeds, nuts, a dish of fruit, and vegetables such as yam, broccoli, carrot, beans, spinach, snow peas, snap peas, cucumber, etc.		
8 - 12 weeks - long fur - bushy tail - increasingly active - can climb well By 12 – 13 weeks of age they are ¾ of adult size and ready for release.	Complete weaning by 10 weeks of age (will likely self wean - gravitate to solid foods more, but some will want to continue with formula). Offer free choice of rodent block and other food listed above.	**PRE-RELEASE LARGE CAGE** At 8 weeks of age, move to large pre-release cage (at least 4ft. x 2ft. x 4ft high, made of 1" welded wire mesh) located in secure shed/garage. Provide wooden nest box (10" x 12"). Add plywood on floor of cage to place food dishes on, so food does not fall through wire. Clean cage daily, they are messy at this age. Place a plastic tarpaulin under the cage with an old sheet on top which will catch the debris – change the sheet once or twice a week.	Add fresh hardwood branches with leaves (they prefer maple) to cage. Add natural elements: - 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 cage.
12+ weeks	Some squirrels will disappear for many days or weeks when first released. Continue to stock feeding station every day **even if you**	**POST-RELEASE** Provide striped, unsalted sunflower seeds, hard shell nuts (almonds, pecans, hazelnuts, walnuts) (use nuts as treats). This helps	Squirrels born in the spring and released in the summer, provide food and water for 4 weeks after release. If released in the fall, continue to feed all winter (they wouldn't of

	do not see them. Provide their food within sight but some distance from the nest box since you do not want to attract other animals to their box.	them collect their back-up supply of food. To provide fresh water, nail a yoghurt container to tree trunk that is holding their nest box. Do not add a lot of water to ensure you can refill it daily.	had enough time to collect/store food for winter).