

FAWNS

By Sally Joosten

Perhaps you or your children spot a lone little fawn lying under some bushes in the woods. The fawn is very still and very small. You decide to leave it alone and will return later to see if the mother has come for it. Several hours later you return only to find the fawn is still there and still not moving. You're worried and wonder if something has happened to the mother.

Please read the following guidelines to determine when and if help is needed. If after reading this information you determine help is needed, please contact a wildlife rehabilitator ([click here for a list](#)) that is located near you. Do not attempt to treat the animal yourself or provide food and water without consulting a licensed wildlife rehabilitator first since this can cause illness or death. The care of a knowledgeable licensed wildlife rehabilitator can help ensure the successful release of the animal back to the wild.

Seldom do fawns need rescuing. When in doubt, call a Wildlife Rehabilitator before you intervene.

A newborn fawn has blue eyes, and is very small. They usually weigh between 4 and 7 pounds. When they stand they look very thin and are very wobbly when taking their first steps. A fawn stays in the same area for approximately the first 3 weeks of its life. The mother doe returns several times during the day to nurse her baby, after which she leaves again so as not to attract predators to the area. The fawn is well camouflaged with its brown and white color which helps it blend into its surroundings. Newborn fawns stay very still while lying. They curl up with their legs tucked under them and their ears flat against their head. This is called the "fright stage". They do not move, especially if something or someone approaches. Fawns are also born with very little scent. A dog can walk a few feet from them and not even know they are there! The reason people should not touch a fawn is because you are putting human scent on them which makes them more vulnerable to predators. So just because it is alone does not mean the fawn is orphaned.

When fawns are around 3 weeks old, they begin to follow their mother and start to eat their first solid foods. Their legs are much stronger, however they still rest a lot but when frightened, they will jump up and run for a short distance and then flatten down on the ground and be very still. This is called the "flight stage". They also spend a good deal of time kicking up their heels and playing with a sibling especially at dawn and dusk when deer are most active.

On occasion, a doe may be leading her fawn across a hi-way and gets separated with the fawn on one side of the road and the doe on the other side. Of course the doe runs away when the vehicle stops. If the fawn is standing or lying by the side of the road, try to herd it off the road, (without touching it if possible) into the grass or nearby woods. As soon as the doe knows it's safe to come out of hiding, she'll retrieve her fawn. Does are wonderful mothers and do not abandon their young.

Help is Needed When:

- . The fawn is crying incessantly while wandering around.
- . Fly eggs are present, blood, or an obvious injury is noticed.
- . The fawn is laying flat on its side,
- . A dead doe is nearby.

CALL A WILDLIFE REHABILITATOR NEAR YOU IMMEDIATELY ([click here for list](#)) IF YOU NOTICE ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS!

Deer Facts

Did you know?

A doe's first breeding usually results in a single fawn. After that she almost always has twins, sometimes triplets and rarely quadruplets. When she gives birth to more than one fawn, they are usually placed a couple hundred feet apart (in the event something happens to one of the fawns). You cannot tell a deer's age by the size of its antlers, or its hooves. A deer's age is told by its teeth.

(Sally Joosten is a founding Board member of The GROW Hospital and Clinical Research Center and has been a professional wildlife rehabilitator and educator, specializing in teaching others who are getting started in the field of wildlife rehabilitation since 1963. She is founder & former Director of McHenry County Conservation District Wildlife Center located in Illinois for twenty years beginning in 1975. She is a founding Board member of the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association (NWRA) and Co-author of "NWRA Principles of Wildlife Rehabilitation, The Essential Guide for Novice and Experienced Rehabilitators" (1st and 2nd Editions). She is founding Board member and current Vice President of the Illinois Wildlife Rehabilitators Association. She has written numerous published papers. She was the recipient of the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association's Lifetime Achievement Award in 1998 and the National Registry of Who's Who in 1999.)