

PROCEDURES **FOR** **FAWN REHABILITATION**

GENERAL DISCUSSION. This protocol is tailored to fawns only. On occasion we are able to get an adult deer on its feet and back into the wild, but this is not the focus of our facility. For this reason we have consolidated some of the subject headings.

It takes inner strength and a complete understanding of the species to raise fawns' wild' and to make difficult, but necessary, decisions on their behalf. Wildlife is under stress the entire time it is in captivity. Stress kills. Fawns easily succumb. Fawns are genetically programmed to be wild. Do not deprive them of this wildness. They must not be thought of as cute, cuddly pets. They are prey. Therefore, the greatest gift we can give them is to allow them to retain their natural fear of predators, which includes man. Do not permit them to think of us as friends. We are not. The fawn facility shall not be open to the public. Human contact shall be kept to a minimum during the months a fawn is in captivity and during its release back into a natural habitat.

NATURAL HISTORY. Mule deer and Colombian black-tailed deer is the predominant deer of California. A black-tail's life is spent among dense shrubs and forests, in contrast to the open country of the mule deer. In 1986, when we received our first fawn, there were no guidelines or any written material available for the rehabilitation of this species. After many years of hands-on learning, successes and failures, and detailed record keeping, this center compiled and published a comprehensive fawn-care manual. This manual, 'The Black-Tailed Fawn - Care in Captivity', contains natural history, maps, drawings, diagrams, biological data and a complete guideline for the care of fawns from rescue to release. As we continue to learn, the manual is updated and revised. It is strongly recommended that this manual be followed as a guide to the understanding and rehabilitation of fawns.

DEVELOPMENT OF PROCEDURES. THINK WILD. This is the basis for each step we have taken in compiling the following procedures. Mandatory procedures are highlighted; others are ones that we strongly recommend. It took many years of success, failure, adjustments and complete revisions to develop procedures that work. Our facility deals with over 100 deer yearly. Each fawn's circumstances are different, and sensible decisions must be made according to their individual needs.

RAISING ORPHANED, ILL, OR INJURED FAWNS

SCREENING CALLS. It too many futile trips, in answer to 'rescue' calls, to learn that there are times when the caller can, and should, handle the problem without our help. Now we ask questions and explain what responsibility is ours, and what is theirs. We do not relocate 'unwelcome' deer. We no longer dash madly around a fence back yard trying to run down a healthy fawn, often injuring it in the process. We advise the caller to pen the gate, place water a slight distance outside the fence as an enticement, leave the area, and allow the animal to escape without the stress of the chase. When the problem is an injured or ill fawn, ask the caller to cautiously approach the fawn to make sure it's immobile and unable to escape. The caller may place a towel over the animal's head to calm it, but other than that, instruct the caller to leave the fawn completely alone until you arrive. Moving an injured fawn, holding it's head on one's lap, the human touch, the sound of a human voice can throw an alert, but injured fawn into shock and does nothing to 'comfort' it. To the troubled fawn, we are a predator.

RESPONDING. Use an enclosed vehicle having a divider between the driver of the vehicle and the animal. Do not transport a fawn in the back of an open truck, nor on the seat of a passenger car. Rescue calls are always emergencies. Keep the rescue vehicle fully equipped so valuable time is not lost. Carry a small plastic carrier, with a blanket on the floor, for young fawns. Cardboard boxes and wire cages are not safe containers. A carpeted floor allows older fawns to ride free of any restraints. An animal stretcher and a long-handled net are secured in the vehicle. Blankets, towels, and a medical kit are essential.

EVALUATION. Carefully assess the situation before approaching the fawn. A healthy fawn, picked up by a person who mistakenly thought it was abandoned, shall be immediately returned to the exact location where it was found, then left alone. A doe will not return to her fawn if she senses danger. Every effort shall be made to reunite a doe and her fawn. If the animal is down, but alert, a net may be needed to stop an attempt to escape. Determine if the injury is severe enough to require a stretcher.

CAPTURE/RESTRAINT. Approach with caution. Keep those hoofs away from you at all times. They can inflict serious injury. A long-handled net held in front of a fawn's head will sometimes slow it just long enough to be captured. Be quick. One chance is all you'll get. Control a fawn by grabbing it behind the neck and push down strongly. It will flatten itself to the ground. Straddle it from behind without putting weight on its body. Cover its head with a towel to calm it. Carry an injured fawn on a stretcher. Keep control of the neck until it is safely contained. Prop a slightly injured fawn on its sternum by placing blankets on either side. Do not use hobbles or other physical restraints. Stress can kill. Do not tie restraints around the nose and mouth, which encumbers its breathing. Deer are extremely sensitive to tranquilizers and they shall not be used for simple transports. The wrong dosage can be fatal. However, if a fawn is badly injured, in obvious pain, or impossible to manage, a small amount of tranquilizer will benefit both the fawn and the handler. Xylazine-100 Injectable - .07cc per each 20 lbs, given IM, is a safe and adequate dosage.

PHYSICAL EXAMINATION/QUARANTINE. Well fawns are driven directly to the facility for a routine exam. Quarantine, for as long as is necessary, any fawn that appears to be ill. Antibiotics are beneficial in treating open wounds and infections. However, antibiotics upset the balance of normal flora within the digestive system while attacking the problem bacteria. Use Probios-180-D, during and after therapy, to help maintain the natural balance of the intestinal microflora. After examination, place the fawn in a warm, quiet environment to let it calm down - alone. A fawn that appears to be calm and submissive is under stress, often in shock. An obviously healthy, alert fawn may be placed directly into the pen to be with others of its own species. This is the best therapy of all for a frightened fawn. A severely injured fawn shall be driven at once to a veterinarian for immediate medical attention, or euthanasia. Rely on the vet's judgment for the evaluation, but rely on your knowledge of wildlife, and the law, for the final decision. Find a vet who will be frank about long-term problems that may arise from any injury that will prevent this prey animal from becoming an agile, fully alert, and powerful adult deer whose survival depends upon its ability to escape from a predator. Do not attempt surgery if the prognosis is not positive. A fawn that has multiple injuries (two broken lets, etc.) will shut down from stress if it cannot get to its feet to stand as it heals. They do not tolerate harnesses, slings, or restraints. Severely injured fawns shall be euthanized immediately. Any fawn that cannot be returned to the wild in complete health shall be euthanized. Recycle into a natural habitat. The body is a natural part of the food chain and must not be wasted.

HOUSING. A newborn fawn needs warmth and security. During extremely cold, rainy weather it cannot be placed alone in a large outdoor pen. Place it in a secure area that is completely free of humans, domestic animals and unnatural noises or disturbances. If nights are warm it is more natural for it to be kept outdoors in a small sheltered enclosure. Keep it warm, dry and protected, but don't pamper it. Indoor confinement causes depression. Allow it to be outdoors as much as possible. Approach only at feeding time, unless it is ill and needs more frequent attention.

The goal is to make the adjustment from confinement to release as natural as possible. Therefore, the ideal release is directly from the enclosure where it was raised. This is a goal worth striving for and is not that difficult to accomplish. We advertise for homeowners to help in fawn-care, with great results. The homeowner-volunteer builds an enclosure on their large, remote acreage. Four fawns are stabilized at our facility, then transferred to this out-shelter where they are raised until they are ready for release. The gate is opened and the four fawns are free to live in the surrounding, familiar territory. Since this is not always possible we must prepare the fawns for the transition from captivity to freedom. These enclosures shall be as wild and natural as we can provide. A facility that has no natural area in which to raise fawns 'wild' shall not attempt the rehabilitation of fawns. Transfer these fawns to a facility in your region that is better equipped for raising fawns.

Erect the enclosure in a wooded area containing rocks, logs, hilly areas, with brush for hiding and browsing. Leave it natural. Only remove sharp objects that might cause injuries. The enclosure shall be large enough for unhampered running, jumping and a swift retreat from any disturbance. Shade is essential. Natural ground, as the substratum, keeps contamination to a minimum. A visual barrier, either natural, or installed, must keep the fawns from contact with humans and domestic animals. Bamboo fencing works well, allowing light and air through, while providing a natural, flexible barrier. However, it's important that fawns be able to look out into extended natural habitat and have contact with free-ranging wildlife when possible. The release of fawns into a wide open territory, after being raised in barracks-like confinement, is an overwhelming experience with which they are not prepared to cope.

Enclosure materials: Fencing - 6' high small-mesh (maximum 2"x4") galvanized fencing is suitable for protection and visibility. Gates with secure latches. A three-sided waterproof shelter constructed of plywood- 4' wide x 6' deep x 4' high. Leave the front completely open for quick exit. Feeding rack, for bottles, attached to fencing with a 12" space between each

bottle hole. A water faucet or automatic water system.

Minimum outdoor enclosure size for fawns" Neonates - (4) 15' x 20' x 6', Nursing (Spotted) - (8) 50' x 100' x 6', Juvenile (Unspotted) - (6) 50' x 100' x 6'. The larger this enclosure is the better it serves our purposes in raising fawns' wild'.

Feeding Racks: Racks permit the fawns to be raised healthy and wild. Nothing protrudes into the pen but the neck of the bottle and the nipple. Bottles are placed in the racks from the outside so there is no need for humans to enter the enclosure.

NURSING/NUTRITION. Formula: Day One Formula 30/40 for Black-Tailed Deer.

Manufactured specifically for the nutritional requirements of Black-Tailed fawns by Fox Valley Animal Nutrition Inc. Phone: 800-679-4666. Because of the high protein and fat content of this specialized formula, fawns thrive, eat less and are more satisfied. Use standard eight ounce baby bottles and standard nipples. Enlarge the hole by cutting a 1/2" X through the nipple. A fawn will not nurse if it must struggle to suck. A complete feeding schedule may be found in our fawn-care manual.

Assign one caregiver to feed the fawns. Neonates will need help as they are introduced to the nipple, stimulated and cleaned. Do not talk or pamper these fawns as they are being attended. Within a few days well fawns are trained to feed at the bottle racks and will no longer need handling. This prevents imprinting. They must relate to each other, not to humans. Do not talk or make unnecessary movements while the fawns are nursing at the feeder. As they approach the feeder, nurse, then leave, observe them closely for their overall well-being.

A large variety of natural browse is essential for proper growth. Oak leaves, acorns, toyon bush, wild grapes, manzanita, poison oak, hanging moss, wild fruit tree leaves and fruit, vetch, a variety of forbs and grasses, whatever is native to the release site. Do not feed fawns garden vegetables, farm or domestic animal foods. They must be prepared to recognize their natural foods upon release. Grain is a natural grass they will find in the wild, therefore, Dry-COB (no molasses) may be offered in limited amounts as a daily supplement.

GENERAL. Tame fawns are put in with others of their own age then left strictly alone. They quickly learn that they are deer and are released with their group. It may be necessary to keep an injured juvenile, received in late fall, into the winter months. However, healthy fawns shall not be wintered-over or kept in confinement past their normal release age. Once a fawn is fully weaned there is no valid reason to keep it in captivity. All fawns must be released during the season in which they were rehabilitated. None may be kept in captivity as permanent residents of the facility.

RELEASE. Release fawns in groups as they mature. There is no reason to have only one 'release day' each season unless your facility only has a few fawns which must all go out together. Once a healthy fawn is weaned and recognizes its natural browse it has no further need for humans. The longer it lives in captivity after weaning the more dependent and imprinted it becomes. Our fawns are raised in groups of four and are released as a family. Follow-ups prove that these groups stay together through their first year. Resident deer do not accept strange fawns. For this reason one lone fawn is not a good candidate for release in an unfamiliar location. The ideal is to open the gate and allow fawns to make a gradual return to the wild in familiar territory. Otherwise, thorough research must be made to locate a suitable habitat for this large-animal species. A Black-Tail's range may be from 90 to 600 acres of wooded rural land. The release must accommodate this need; provide plenty of natural browse and a year-round water source. Other human-related hazards must be considered: vineyards, fences, hunting areas, gardens, public roads, etc. Most public parks don't make acceptable release sites due the overpopulation of deer and public access. Private landowners may not want additional wildlife on their property and the animal could be trapped or shot. Permission to release fawns in these locations shall be obtained in writing from the landowners or from a public park official. Notify the property owner of time and day you will be

on their property. To insure against overpopulation, no more than six fawns shall be released in any one area during the year. They must compete with resident herds for space and nourishment. Do not tranquilize any fawns before release. Sedation puts them at a disadvantage both mentally and physically. These prey animals must be fully alert and able to adapt at once. Allow the fawns to travel without restraint during transport. Due to the motion of the vehicle they quickly lie down and ride well. Keep the release low key. The release shall not be open to the public. Fawns must not relate their new home to humans. After the fawns are released leave at once.

Release Day: These wild and powerful animals cannot be captured easily from a large pen. A fawn will not run through an open gate that is located in the center of a long fence. Build a fawn chute approximately 3' wide X 18' long X 6' high at one corner of the fence. Install one gate at the entrance and another at the far end. Line the inside of the chute and gates with plywood. Park the transport vehicle just outside the far end of the chute, close to the gate. Using several volunteers, walk slowly behind the group of fawns inside the pen, herding them toward the entrance to the chute. If this is done quietly, without alarming the fawns they will run through the gate and into the chute. Close the gate quickly behind as many fawns that have run into the chute. You may not get them all on the first try and the ones left behind will be alerted and harder to herd. Two volunteers are needed inside the chute, one to pick up and carry the fawn and another to guard against the others escaping. Once they are confined in the chute don't stand still, keep moving in, and don't hesitate. Catch them off guard as they hit into the wood fence, lose their balance and are most vulnerable. The more quickly you work the fewer problems you'll create. Grab the fawn from behind, keeping those hoofs away from your body. Keep control of the neck. Have a volunteer outside the gate to open the gate and the truck back as you transfer it to the vehicle. Close the back quickly. Repeat with each fawn, taking care not to open the vehicle door too wide allowing the first to escape. They will all be transferred within minutes. The fawns will jump around in the vehicle at first but will not injure themselves. Be prepared to leave at once. It is not necessary to black out windows. It's important to drive right to the water source, if possible. Open the back, stand quietly to the side and let them exit.

CONCLUSIONS. Every fawn is received due to human interference. It is our deep obligation to correct this wrong by caring for and returning them back into the wild where they belong. Some will not survive. If we have done our job well, in the THINK WILD mode, most of them will. Our rewards are in knowing we made the effort, and in watching them bound away to freedom.

'Black-Tailed Fawns - Care In Captivity.' It is recommended that this complete care manual be used in addition to the protocol.

Contents: Part One: Natural History, herds, maps, anatomy, etc.

Part Two: Complete care - Supplies, Rescue, Admission, Housing, Nutrition, Diseases, Release, etc.

Part Three: Feeding schedule - Birth to Weaning.

Part Four: Attachments - Stress, Capture Myopathy, Restraints, Probois, Out-shelters, etc

Mail check for \$12.00 to Wildlife Fawn Rescue.

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