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877-596-7776

Adapted by Sophia DiPietro

These are the steps that All Species Kinship guides callers through when there is a *potential* orphaned fawn concern. You may try to replicate these steps on your own if you are out of our geographic area (Calhoun County, Michigan), or if you do not have someone experienced in wildlife concerns to help you assess a fawn situation. These tips are adapted from Diane E. Solecki's fact sheet. You may also refer to [www.fawncare.com](http://www.fawncare.com).

Below are the **A.B.C** steps advised for determining *if* a fawn needs help. **After** following the steps, if any of the below are seen/determined, the fawn likely needs to be rescued, and transported to a licensed fawn rehabilitator. Keep in mind, no human is a good replacement for a deer—therefore we exercise **extreme caution** before intervening for the benefit of the fawn. Rehabilitators are an absolute last resort that should only be used for emergency situations!

#### **A rehabilitator is *likely* needed if:**

-If fawn is found next to a dead doe (call a rehabilitator, fawns of a certain age are **not** in need of human assistance even if they are found this way)

-If fawn has been in the hands of an unlicensed person for several days and/OR has been fed a replacement formula of some kind (do NOT attempt to feed a fawn ANYTHING, doing so often results in **death**)

-If you notice diarrhea, maggots (maggot eggs look like saw dust), severe scrapes or deep puncture wounds

-If fawn is severely dehydrated (see below to determine this)

-If fawn body temperature is extremely low (see below to determine this)

-If something appears broken (you may NOT assume a limb is broke just because the fawn is weak)

-If found laying on its side with outstretched limbs

#### **Understanding Deer Behavior**

In Michigan, fawns reportedly can be born between May 15 to June 15 on average (dependent on temperature, weather, resources etc.) However, fawns have been born as early as April or late August.

Female deer (does) stake out their territory, and their fawn(s) will be the only deer in that particular area. This area may be as small as 2 acres, or as large as 20 acres. Once giving birth, the doe cleans feeds and then moves the fawn away from the birthing site.

The doe **will leave her fawns alone** for periods of *at least 8 hours* at a time, while she feeds, drinks and replenishes her milk. She returns to the fawn several times during the course of the day.

Fawns have no odor, which is why they can be left safely by their mother in tall grass, exhibiting “freeze behavior” for the first 2 weeks of their lives. Predators cannot smell them, and since mom visits the fawn very *few* times throughout the day, she does NOT lure predators to the site of her immobile baby. Of course predators can come across fawns accidentally if they happen to be walking in the same path, and that is nature—no human intervention is warranted under this circumstance.

A fawn is not strong enough to run with a doe until at least 3 weeks of age. If you see a fawn moving, running, or bounding well, assume that it is at least 3 weeks old.

Note: During the first 10 days (2 weeks) fawns are typically immobile and “frozen” in tall grass. You can easily walk up and approach them during this time.

After 2 weeks, fawns are in the “jump and run” period. If you come across them, they will flee. If a fawn is determined to be orphaned and still in need of parental care at this stage, the normal protocol is for you to wait until they are exhausted and weak from not eating. It is rare that a fawn at this stage will be in need of human help. Chemical immobilization (dart gun) is not usually an option since tranquilizer dosing and trauma from the dart result in high mortality during capture.

By five to six weeks, fawns are ruminating and therefore capable of digesting grasses and plant matter. (Per conversation w/Diane Solecki)

Fawns ARE occasionally abandoned: deer may have triplets or twins, and if one is disproportionately smaller than others, it may be left behind by an “inexperienced” parent that is easily scared away from her fawns by people or dogs, although this rarely happens.

**Remember:** Mother Nature always does the best job of raising wildlife; exercise extreme caution when removing any wildlife from the wild and make certain that the animal really needs human assistance. Kidnapping wild babies that do not really need help only does those animal a disservice; you are **not** really “helping” the animal. You will **NOT** successfully be able to raise a fawn and prepare it for the wild, providing all of the necessary behavioral training and nutrients. Legitimately orphaned fawns should only be given to *licensed* rehabilitators that have a proven track record and experience with DEER. State laws may prohibit deer rehabilitation in areas where risk of disease is high. Please pay attention to your local state laws and remember, a fawn is not a pet, nor does it want to be one.

**Complete this hands-on check [required] to determine if a fawn needs human assistance:**

- A. When approaching a fawn that you are concerned about: fawns that are scared OR hungry may bleat loudly to attract their mother back to them. If you approach/touch the fawn and it bleats and mother appears in the distance, step away and problem solved!
- B. If no adult deer are present, stand the fawn up. Feel under the stomach to locate presence of an umbilical scab. If there is an obvious scab felt, the fawn is under one week old. Lift the tail and look for signs of diarrhea, check for maggots, scrapes and punctures. You should be conducting the check right where you found the fawn, or within very close proximity.

- C. Place your pinkie finger into the corner of the fawn's mouth, toward the back of the tongue. A fawn's normal body temperature is ~102F degrees, so it should feel warm to the touch, and saliva should NOT feel sticky.
- D. Check for dehydration step 1: Pull up the skin on the fawn's back; check for tenting. Tenting is seen when the skin does not quickly return back to the body of the animal-the skin stays stuck up and *slowly* returns.
- E. Check for dehydration step 2: Locate the small indentation between the corner of the eye and ear. Fawns are born with a thin layer of fat under the skin. When healthy and hydrated this depression is barely visible. When *severely dehydrated* the fat reserve is used up and depressions can be as deep as ¼ inch. Severe dehydration can also make the eyes look like they are protruding. Stress of not eating can cause diarrhea.
- F. If NONE of the above symptoms are noted, place the fawn in deep grass closest to where you found it, if moved. At this point human intervention is not required. Keep dogs and people away from area to avoid scaring adult deer away. Keep an eye on the situation for a few hours. If it's morning, wait until after dark if you still do not notice any adult deer in the area. If it's evening, leave the fawn alone until the morning. Remember, adult deer are not "sitting" on their fawns all day long, so just because you don't see the adult all day, doesn't mean that she isn't caring for her fawn. WEATHER PERMITTING: a very young fawn cannot tolerate cold, wet conditions for a long period of time. After waiting a few hours, if the fawn is still near the spot it was returned to, call a rehabilitator and re-assess the situation. It will likely need to be transported to the rehabilitator.

Note: It takes **several days** for a fawn to starve to death (depending upon age and size). **Without putting human scent on the fawn, the doe will not perceive it to be in any danger.** You **WANT** the doe to smell your scent on the fawn because she will then move the fawn-contrary to popular belief, she will NOT abandon it. If the doe is still alive and has not abandoned her fawn for other reasons, once smelling *your* scent, she will move her to the *farthest* part of her fawning range as opposed to the average 200 feet she would move her if there were no perceived danger! White-tail fawns usually will move no more than 50 feet without the urging of their mothers.

The above protocol has resulted in many happy reunions of does and fawns and helps to assure that *only* fawns truly in need are rescued! Remember, just because a situation seems like an "emergency" to you, **very few** calls that A.S.K. receives are requiring of human intervention. Most wildlife rehabilitators will advise waiting a *minimum of 24 hours* before taking *any* action. The biggest tragedy we see is concerned people taking action on their own which more often than not results in a severely sick or dead fawn that is beyond the help of a rehabilitator.