

FOXES AND COYOTES

Identifying a Baby

At birth in the spring, coyotes and foxes are covered with short, dark fur. Even red foxes have dark brown or black fur when they are born. Their eyes are closed and will remain closed for several weeks. Although their bodies are only five to eight inches long at birth and lack the distinctive coloration of adulthood, these babies are typically easy to identify because of their similarity to domestic canine puppies. Both coyotes and foxes have wide, blunt noses; rounded ears; and dog-like paws. As they grow, both their ears and noses become more triangular in shape. Coyotes take on a mottled greyish-brown appearance, and red foxes develop their characteristic red coat and black paws. Another identifying marker is that **coyotes have a black-tipped tail**, and **red foxes have a white-tipped tail**. Grey foxes have a black-tipped tail.

Pups whose eyes are closed, who are not well coordinated on their feet, and who lack adult coloration are normally found inside the den at all times. Once their eyes open, baby foxes and coyotes become more active inside their dens.

Is the Fox or Coyote Orphaned?

When to rescue Young Pups

A baby coyote or fox **found outside the den** at this stage of development might be in the process of being relocated by the parent. If there is evidence that supports this idea, such as a baby found at a site with recent adult activity, **monitor the baby from a distance for one to two hours before intervention**. If no activity is observed and the pup is alone for more than two hours, **contact Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Center at (303) 823-8455**.



IMPORTANT: Contact Greenwood Wildlife **before** trying to capture the animal. You can also call Colorado Parks and Wildlife or an Animal Control officer.

When to Rescue Older Pups

Pups begin to emerge occasionally from the den as the weaning process begins. This begins at approximately four-weeks old for red foxes and at three-weeks old for coyotes. The babies begin to play and fight outside the den and are brought food by their parents. The first week after red fox kits emerge, their fur may still be brownish in color, but it shortly molts into the reddish color typically seen in adults. The fur on their legs is black. Juveniles are still being cared for by their parents but are learning to hunt on their own and are gradually spending less time at the den sight.

By late summer and early fall, juvenile foxes and coyotes are becoming increasingly independent. The age at which they become totally independent varies by species, conditions, and other social factors. Juveniles seen alone at this time of year, or even those known to be

orphaned, should be monitored for signs of deterioration, such as weakness, lethargy, or human-friendly behavior, before any intervention is considered. Older orphan foxes may not require rehabilitative care.

Behavior is the best gauge of whether intervention is required at this age. If baby foxes or coyotes are seen in early- to mid-summer with no adult present, but appear to be healthy, active on their feet, and wary of people, monitor the pups from a distance for several hours to see if a parent returns before intervening. Any young coyote or fox who appears weak or lethargic, is seen sleeping in an exposed area, frequently vocalizes or approaches people should be rescued. Call **Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Center** at **(303) 823-8455** **before** attempting a rescue. Colorado Parks and Wildlife or an Animal Control office can also be called.

Handling Considerations

Due to the risk of injury, adult foxes and coyotes should not be handled directly. **It is best to contact Greenwood Wildlife, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, or Animal Control for capture.** Foxes and coyotes are rabies vector animals, so direct contact should be avoided – even with babies – since identification may be confusing, especially in foxes. Young animals can bite, and although rabies is rare, the serious consequences of potential exposure to both animal and rescuer must be considered when devising a plan of rescue for these animals. Young foxes and coyotes who are smaller than an adult cat and appear docile may be handled when other methods of capture are not possible. **Wear leather or Kevlar gloves and place a thick blanket over the pup.** Scoop the baby up in the blanket and transfer it immediately to a prepared container.



WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET BIT

If any person is bitten or scratched, follow these steps:

- 1) Clean the wound with soap and water.
- 2) Consult with a doctor, even if the cut appears to be minor. If the injury was caused by a raccoon, skunk, fox, coyote or bat, or any domestic rabies vector species, you should not wait for a doctor's appointment but instead see an emergency room physician.
- 3) If the animal is a raccoon, skunk, fox, coyote or bat, you should also report the incident to your local health department.
- 4) If at any time you feel that the situation is unsafe or that you might be injured, call Colorado Parks and Wildlife or Animal Control.

Appropriate Rescue Methods Based on Age and Mobility

1. Use a dog crate or wire crate for baby foxes and coyotes or for adults so debilitated that they are not able to move away. Use gloves and a heavy blanket to capture the animal, or place the crate in front of the animal and encourage it to move inside. The crate needs to be big enough to allow the animal to stand up and turn around. Line the crate

with newspaper and soft, string-free material, like a blanket or towel. Once trapped, reduce the animal's stress by covering the crate with a sheet that acts as a visual barrier between the animal and people. When transporting, **NO radio** and **minimal talking**.

Transport to Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Center as soon as possible.

2. Use a live trap when animals are too mobile or dangerous to catch. A large dog trap is usually necessary to accommodate these species. Please refer to “**Baiting a Live Trap**” below for further information.
3. **Use gloves and a thick blanket for young baby foxes or coyotes only!** Use a dog crate, a box with holes, or a plastic container with holes to transport the animal. Line the box with newspaper and soft, string-free material, such as a towel or blanket.

Temperature

Babies who are smaller than an adult cat, or any animal who is wet, shivering, or suffering from mange, should be given a heat source, such as a heating pad set on LOW underneath half of the container. Chemical hand warmers, such as Hot Paws, can be placed under the bedding. A plastic bottle filled with hot water, wrapped in a thin towel, and anchored to the inside of the container so it cannot roll may be used for babies as an alternative to a heating pad, though they must be replaced frequently as they cool down.

Baiting a Live Trap

When a live trap is required to catch a sick, injured, or orphaned fox or coyote, place canned cat or dog food, or any kind of meat in the back of the trap. Since foxes and coyotes, in particular, are so wary of traps, it may be necessary to first get the animal used to the presence of the trap by putting it out for several nights with food **outside** the trap door before the trap is actually baited and engaged. Once the animal is trapped, cover the trap completely with a blanket or towel and **transport to Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Center as soon as possible**. Do not attempt to move the animal from the trap into an alternate container.

NO FOOD OR WATER!

Due to the risk of injury or escape involved when reopening the container once the animal is contained, it is not advisable to offer adult mammals a dish of water. While the risk may be less with young babies, they are usually not able to drink on their own.

People often think that feeding an orphaned baby will make it feeling better, but doing so can actually endanger its life. Here are the reasons why:

- 1) If the animal is dehydrated, emaciated, or suffering from trauma, it won't be able to digest food. If it tries to do so, it could bloat or go into shock.
- 2) Baby animals can easily inhale food or liquid into their lungs by accident, a situation which can quickly lead to pneumonia and possible death. This is particularly common with baby birds – you should **NEVER drop liquid into a gaping bird's mouth or into the mouths of baby mammals who are at a suckling stage**. Even a small amount of liquid in the lungs can lead to infection.

- 3) Foods that are not a normal part of the animal's diet, like bread and cow's milk, can cause serious digestive problems.

Five Tell-Tale Signs That a Baby Fox or Coyote Needs Help

- 1) The baby is too young to walk properly, and is found outside of its den.
- 2) The baby is approaching people or frequently vocalizing.
- 3) The baby appears sick or injured in any way.
- 4) The baby has been under human care for 24 hours or more.
- 5) It is known with certainty that **both** parents have been killed or trapped and removed.

Babies showing none of these signs may still be orphaned, but the above are near certain indicators that the baby needs help. Call Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Center at **(303) 823-8455 for assistance.**

Coyotes and Foxes Suffering from Mange

Both of these species are commonly affected by sarcoptic mange, a condition caused by an infestation of microscopic mites that burrow into the skin of the animal, resulting in an intensely itchy rash. Self-trauma from scratching leads to the characteristic hair loss and thickened, crusty appearance to the skin. Although the sarcoptic mites are a common parasite which results in minimal harm to their host in low numbers, severe infestation causes secondary problems for the affected animal, such as significant hair loss, painful bedsores, infections, hypothermia (cold), and as their condition deteriorates, severe emaciation and dehydration. Foxes or coyotes affected by mange need to be treated by a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. Call **Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Center** at **(303) 823-8455**.

Sarcoptic mange is a zoonotic disease, meaning that it can be transferred to humans. This condition in humans is called scabies. Generally, mange is a fairly species-specific parasite. In order for the parasite to survive, it needs exactly the right environment. Mange mites that live on foxes or coyotes do not normally thrive on healthy human hosts. These mites also cannot survive long in the environment with any host. Animals and people whose immune systems may be compromised are most at risk of contracting sarcoptic mange. Outdoor pets with high levels of exposure, such as those sleeping in the same area where the affected animal has been sleeping, may be at a higher risk. Contact your local veterinarian with any concerns regarding your pet.

Coyotes and Foxes Seen during Daytime

Since foxes and coyotes generally forage at night, there is a common misconception that seeing one during the day is an indication of illness. If the animal has been chased away or excluded from its daytime den, or if the competition for food is high due to limited resources, these animals may come out during daylight hours. Foxes, in particular, are curious animals that will often hang around residential areas. Baby foxes and coyotes are also commonly seen out during the day.