

QUESTION

What do I feed an owl?

Caring for a lost or injured owl chick is complicated by so many different factors. It is very difficult to answer your initial question because not only do all of these factors need to be considered but also, just reading a leaflet on the internet is not really satisfactory. The paramount message here is—get the chick to a vet or licensed carer IMMEDIATELY. Please remember that if you do take inappropriate action—its your responsibility entirely and this could ultimately mean the death of an owl!

When a young owl is found here is what you might decide to do —

Is it in immediate danger (cars, humans, predators) or even in blazing hot sun?

YES ✓ *Move it gently and put it on a solid branch above the ground in brush*

NO ✓ *Leave it where it is and keep an eye out for mum or dad. If you are still concerned you could watch for mum or dad to return by hiding as far away from the chick as you can. The owl may just climb or scramble back up the tree within a couple of hours. If you've already brought it home and are reading this leaflet now and feel you may have made a mistake picking the owlet up then go and put it back where you found it! **Owl parents will not reject their young just because you've touched them.***

Usually a healthy owl will hiss and give a defence display. If there is no reaction something could be wrong so does the owl look injured or dazed?

YES ✓ *Take it to a vet, rehab centre or call someone who is licensed to care for wildlife*

IMMEDIATELY!

NO ✓ *If you know that the parents have not visited the chick for more than 12 hours (this requires a lot of spying) it may be time to take some careful action. Of course again vet or rehab is always the first move to make but if no one can come for the moment then you may decide to take the owl in a towel and put into a big cardboard box in a moderately warm room and gently cover the box to reduce stress. Owls can die of stress and **you** will be the one stressing it if not handled properly. Leave the owl there until you find that rehab, centre or vet.*

Minimize contact with the owl at all times. Do not handle or look at it unless absolutely necessary.

If you have already taken an owlet home for whatever reason, you are now responsible for it's well-being. Owls will die without the proper care. **There is NO OTHER ALTERNATIVE BUT TO GET THE OWLET TO A PROFESSIONAL.. DO NOT MAKE EXCUSES!** There is a life at stake. Ring a vet or rehab centre immediately!

Feeding owlets is difficult and time consuming. Improper feeding and the wrong food will kill a young owl. It cannot be emphasised too strongly that professional and licensed care must be sought. **NO** food should ever be forced nor should water as you could drown the owl even with just a couple of drops. A starving owl can be killed if it's fed without proper fluid therapy, and it's tricky to give fluids without drowning the bird as their airway is far too close to their stomach pipe and people may mistake the airway for the stomach—forcing water into an airway will obviously drown the owl. The owl could have internal injuries that may not be apparent but also dehydration is one the greatest concerns. That is why it is so important you get the owl to professionals!

THINK YOU'D LIKE TO RAISE IT? Don't. Owls do not make good pets. Even if you raise it with the intention of releasing it, and manage to provide an adequate, natural diet and teach it to hunt, the owl will grow up thinking it's a human. Human-imprinted owls rarely survive in the wild since they have no idea how to interact with other owls and will normally choose to associate with humans. This leaves you with an owl that will be driven out of territories by others of its species, and will likely look for a human as a mate. Even if the object of those affections doesn't freak out having an owl trying to land on their head, the neighbours won't be too happy when that owl decides to drive all 'rivals' (humans) out of it's territory. This is where those stories of owl attacks come from! Additionally, in some places it is illegal to keep raptors even ones that are found so please do keep this mind. They are not pets and should never become one. They come from the wild and must be returned there.

ABSOLUTELY CAN'T FIND A REHAB FACILITY ANYWHERE NEAR YOU?

If you really can't find help on your own from your local wildlife department, nature center, or wildlife rehabilitation you can seek online help here at owlpages. Owl specialists will assist you to identify the age, species and basic emergency needs of the owlet that may help to sustain life until you can get local assistance.