



**State of California • Department of Fish and Game**  
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# NEWS

## **NEWS RELEASE**

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **DFG Recommends Californians Leave Young Wildlife Alone**

The Department of Fish and Game (DFG) urges people who are out enjoying the outdoors not to handle young wild animals they may encounter.

People often spot young wild animals they think are orphaned or need help. In most cases they are neither, and should be left alone. In 2008, more than 500 fawns were turned into California rehabilitation facilities by well-meaning members of the public. Many of these fawns were healthy and did not need to be disturbed.

Once a fawn is removed from its mother, it can lose its ability to survive in the wild. The same danger applies to most animals, including raccoons, bears, coyotes and most birds. Disease is another reason that wild animals should not be handled. Wild animals can transmit diseases that can be contracted by humans, including rabies and tularemia, and also carry ticks, fleas and lice.

People improperly handling young wildlife is a problem across the nation, most commonly in the spring, when many species are caring for their young offspring.

“People frequently pick up young wild animals because they believe they have been orphaned or abandoned and need to be saved,” said Nicole Carion, DFG’s statewide coordinator for wildlife rehabilitation and restricted species. “However, in the vast majority of cases the parents are still caring for their offspring and the attempt to ‘rescue’ the young animal all too frequently results in harm. Even though California has many capable rehabilitation centers, people need to understand that humans cannot provide the survival training or the perfect diet provided naturally by their wild mothers.”

The responsibility for intervention should be left to DFG personnel or permitted wildlife rehabilitators. It is illegal to keep orphaned or injured animals for more than 48 hours in California. People can call a rehabilitator, who will determine whether there is a need for a rescue. Rehabilitators are trained to provide care for wild animals so they retain their natural fear of humans and do not become habituated or imprinted. For more information, visit DFG’s wildlife rehabilitation website at [www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/rehab/facilities.html](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/rehab/facilities.html).

Remember: Wildlife belongs in the wild. As wildlife experts say: “If you care, leave them there.”

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