



Keeping a Squirrel as a Pet: ARE YOU NUTS?!

Cute isn't he? Baby squirrels may be as charming and adorable as kittens or puppies but don't be fooled by their cute, cuddly nature at this young age. A baby squirrel is a far cry from the adult animal it will become. Trying to raise a baby squirrel as a pet can be disastrous for both you and the squirrel.

You will be bitterly disappointed to discover that there are good reasons they have never be domesticated:

- Firstly, it's illegal to keep them as pets and California requires licenses and wildlife rehabilitator training.
- Unlike our typical pets and companion animals, squirrels lack the instinct to rely on others for food, protection or companionship. This makes the adult squirrel a solitary animal unsuited for living with others.
- Young squirrels need to be with other squirrels the first six to eight weeks of life to learn survival skills and squirrel behavior; after eight weeks they won't accept other squirrels. A squirrel raised alone has not learned how to fend for itself so it will die if released to the wild.
- Squirrels do not accept any strangers after about nine weeks of age. They won't accept pet sitters or out-of-town visitors. Even squirrels that learn to tolerate and accept one human will not behave the same toward anyone else.
- Squirrels do not adapt easily to new environments. Changing their environment can make them very fearful and aggressive or so stressed that they can have seizures and die.
- A squirrel's teeth grow continuously and they chew on anything – walls, woodwork, etc. Puppies chew when teething, but squirrels chew indiscriminately throughout their lives. They can't be taught what is acceptable to chew and what is not.
- Adult squirrels have razor sharp nails necessary for grasping, climbing and jumping. They do not retract like a cat's claws – making them more damaging to furniture, drapes and human skin.
- Squirrels can't be disciplined or trained to use a litter box!
- A squirrel's behavior is unpredictable and much more instinctive than a dog or cat. They are easily frightened and more likely to turn on a known handler.
- Squirrels need to be raised with other squirrels to learn how to survive in the wild. Keeping a young one as a pet, then releasing him as an adult without proper training is a death sentence.

To quote the National Wildlife Rehabilitation Association, "A captive squirrel is constantly looking for a way out and that behavior cannot be changed." The greatest kindness you can do for an orphaned or injured baby squirrel, and if we truly love them, is to let the [Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center](#) care for it until it can be released back into the wild to be the wild creature it is meant to be...

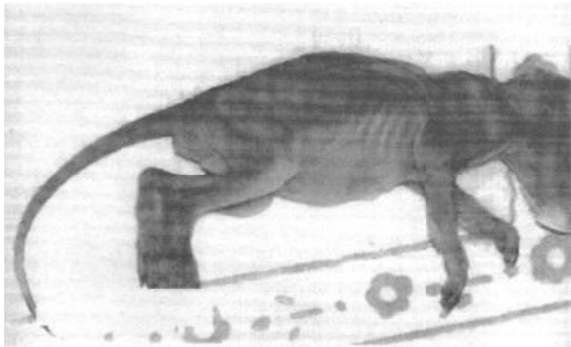
Inexperienced people trying to raise squirrels will feed them what they believe is healthy food, assuming that because the animals are eating they are doing fine. However, in comparison with the healthy baby squirrels in the bottom right shows that these squirrels are actually **starving!**



Baby squirrels fed Hartz kitten milk for 10 days



Baby squirrel fed evaporated milk for 10 days



Baby squirrel fed scalded cows' milk for 10 days



Baby squirrels fed powdered squirrel formula

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