What to do if you find a Baby Seal

Each year, wildlife rehabilitation centres care for many healthy seal pups that are mistakenly believed to be abandoned. Learn what to do if you find a seal pup.

What you should do
If you find a baby seal that you believe is orphaned or injured:

• Keep your distance and observe to see if mom returns — she will often leave her young on shore for hours at a time while hunting. Observing from too near a distance can discourage mom from returning.

• Keep pets away from the area. Dogs can cause injury to marine mammals, and disease can be passed between the species.

• Observe from a distance and take note of the seal pup's condition:
  - Does it have any visible injuries?
  - Is the animal breathing?
  - Is it responding to its surroundings?
  - Is it plump or thin?
  - Is it vocalizing?
  - Can you see other seals in the area?

• If you have a camera phone, you can take an image to send to rehabilitators when asked about the animal's condition.

What you shouldn't do

• Don't try to coax or push it into the water.

• Don't approach the pup:
  - it causes more stress to the animal;
  - the seal could bite; and,
  - you may startle adult seals into the water. They may even abandon their pups if frightened away.

• Don't try to capture or care for the animal yourself. It is ILLEGAL to keep wildlife without a permit.

• Don't let dogs approach or allow off leash in the area.
When to get help

- The seal is obviously injured (bleeding).
- You know the seal is an orphan (dead parent is observed).
- The pup has been alone for several hours without a parent visible.
- A seal pup is seriously underweight or premature.
- The pup appears distressed or non-responsive.

Underweight pups like this one are long and skinny. Healthy pups are plump and solidly round.

Key Facts about Baby Seals

- It is not unusual to see a seal out of the water; seals spend 30–40% of their time ashore.
- Like many other wild animals, seal mothers leave their pups alone for short periods of time while they look for food.
- Seals give birth between June and September, with most births occurring in July and August. Pups are nursed and protected by their mothers for 4 to 6 weeks. During this time they gain the extra fat they need to survive while they learn to fend for themselves.

Who to call

If a young animal is truly orphaned or injured, it needs prompt attention!

Contact the BC SPCA’s wildlife hotline for more information or to locate a wildlife rehabilitation facility: 1-855-6BC-SPCA (1-855-622-7722)