

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.



All Photos Courtesy Vancouver Aquarium Marine Mammal Rescue Centre

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.

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.



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

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.

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)



You can help wildlife now

An injured or orphaned animal's best chance for success is to be cared for by a wildlife rehabilitation centre. Help us care for wild animals in need at www.wildarc.com

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