

Wild Baby Mammals: The First 48 Hours and Beyond

Southern Flying Squirrel

Age Clues: Appearance And Behaviors

Birth	Their birth weight is approximately 5 to 6 grams. They are born with their eyes and ears closed and are mostly furless with just a few short hairs on the chin and muzzle. They are born with a patagium (a skin flap from front to hind legs on both sides, which will eventually be covered with soft fur and will be used for gliding). Formula feed every 2 hours with 2 night feedings.
1 week	The flyer babies weigh an average of 8 grams at one week. The fur is now visible on the body. Formula feed every 2 hours, with 2 night feedings.
2 weeks	They weigh approximately 10 grams. The fur is beginning to grow but they are still thinly furred. Their eyes are still closed. Their lower incisors begin to emerge. Formula feed every 2 to 2 ½ hours with one night feeding.
3 weeks	The average weight is 15 grams. Their teeth may begin to erupt. Their ears are opened and they now begin to respond to sound. Formula feed every 3 hours.
4 weeks	They weigh an average of 25 grams. Their eyes open between 24 to 30 days and are black and large. They will eventually have excellent night vision. Formula feed every 3 ½ hours. The night feeding can be eliminated.
5 weeks	The average weight is 30 grams. The fur is now present on their stomachs. Play behavior begins. Formula feed every 4 hours. Offer small pieces of weaning foods in the cage. Continue to provide heat until they choose to move away from the heat source.
6 weeks	The average weight is 35 grams. In the wild, they begin to travel with the mother and explore outside of the nest. In rehabilitation, they begin to eat solid foods and explore the cage. Watch for constipation and make sure that water is always easily available. Formula feed every five hours.
7 weeks	Continue weaning, check their hydration and weigh them often to ensure that they are eating well on their own. Put toys and interesting items such as branches and cardboard tubes in the cage for stimulation. Formula feed every six hours.
8-10 weeks	They should be weaned at 8 or 9 weeks of age. Move them to the pre-release pen. Furnish the cage with upright wood slabs for landing practice, cardboard tubes to hide in, branches, leaf litter and soil. Provide a nest box. There should be enough space in the cage for the squirrels to practice gliding. Offer insects along with a selection of their other natural foods.
10-12 weeks	Young begin to molt to their first adult fur when they are about 12 weeks old.
5-6 months	Arrange your care so that the flying squirrel is on a nocturnal schedule before release. Release.

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Because they are so small, they should be fed small amounts, with more frequent feedings than other species. A 1 cc syringe with a nipple fashioned from a 5 1/2 or 8 French feeding tube cut to 1/4 to 1/2 inch long are appropriate feeding tools. Initially use 4 to 4 1/2% of the baby's body weight as a guide for the amount to offer at each feeding and increase the percentage (as high as 7% in some cases) as the baby grows. Make your decision to increase based on the baby's appetite and how well it digests the amounts given. Growth is rapid and amounts will need to be reevaluated daily.

Weaning Diet:

80% rodent blocks

20% fresh fruits

Berries

Vegetables

Mealworms

Crickets

They should have branches, sterilized marrowbones or antlers in the cage to chew.

Natural Diet:

- Nuts, primarily acorns and hickory nuts
- Buds, twigs and bark
- Sap
- Grain and seeds
- Bird eggs and nestlings
- Insects
- Fruit and berries
- Fungus and lichen
- Carrion
- Shrews and mice

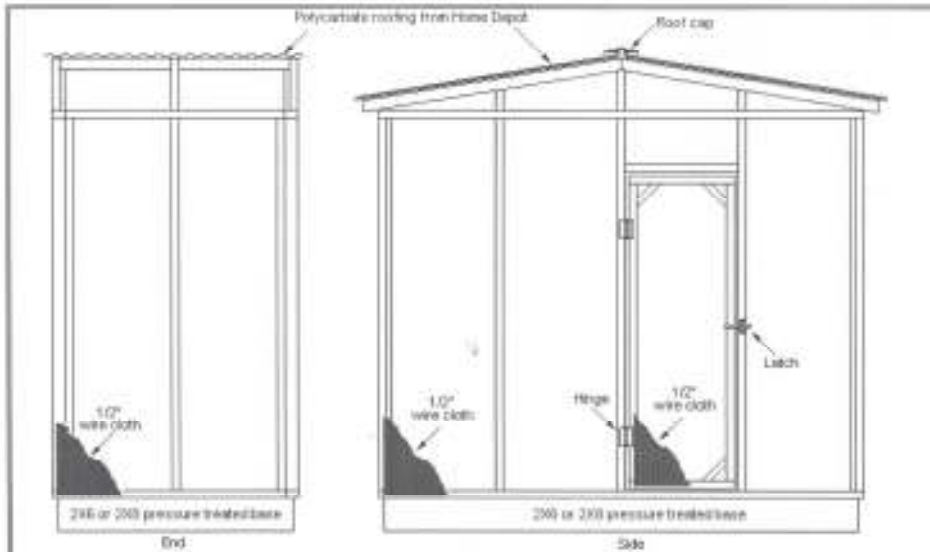
Release Criteria:

They need two or three weeks in an outside cage to practice gliding skills. They should be active and opening nuts. Release them late in the day.

Release is best done to the colony they came from but if this isn't safe or practical, another established colony would work out. If you can't find a colony, choose an area with a combination of soft and hard woods, mast producing trees and a year around fresh water source. Dead trees with woodpecker holes might be used as a shelter. If none are seen in an area, provide nest boxes. Release two or more flyers there and they may start their own colony.

Special Considerations:

Young flying squirrels stay with their mother for 4 to 5 months and sometimes through the winter. Flyers in the rehabilitator's care should be released at 5 or 6 months of age.



- (1) Base is 2x6 or 2x8 pressure treated. 1/2" wire cloth attached to bottom (which will be against the ground). Base is then filled with sea stone.
 - (2) Sides are constructed from 2x4, assembled with 3" galvanized DW screws. 2x4's should be pre drilled.
 - (3) Sides should be painted with exterior grade paint (Dutch Boy porch and floor paint - 1/2 gallon @ Home).
 - (4) 1/2" wire cloth (from Home Depot) is attached to side framing using roofing nails at the welded points every 8".
 - (5) Sides and ends are now assembled to the base.
 - (6) Roof framing is attached to walls (using screws) and painted.
 - (7) 1/2 wire cloth is attached to sides and end panels. Polycarbonate roofing from Home Depot is attached using screws.
 - (8) Construct roof cap from scrap plywood 1" pine etc. ... Paint, then install (pg2)
 - (9) Construct door from 2x4, paint, then attach wire cloth with roofing nails, then hang with Stanley hinges from Home Depot (about \$4 for a pair)
 - (10) Install latch and door box, shelf (so the critters can hang out) via use stamped sheet metal shelf brackets, about \$1.30 at Home Depot.
- Note: Paint all door and shelf surfaces. ... Clearing is MUCH easier!