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**DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND
LAND MANAGEMENT**



Fauna Series

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Care of Young Kangaroos

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INTRODUCTION

Kangaroos, wallabies and all other marsupials are protected fauna and may not be kept in captivity except under license. On occasions, because they have been orphaned or abandoned, some of these animals are in need of care and attention in their early life.

The Department is most grateful to everyone who temporarily cares for abandoned or orphaned joeys and does not insist on licences being held to cover this good work. However if an animal is unable to fend for itself after weaning, and you wish to keep and care for it, a licence must be obtained.

WARNING:

It should be noted that mature unsterilized male kangaroos (Greys, Reds and Euros) can become difficult to handle and are capable of causing injury.

EARLY DEVELOPMENT

Kangaroos and wallabies are born only about 30 days after being conceived and are therefore at a very early stage of development. They are 25-50 mm in length, have no fur and the only well-formed parts of the body are the front limbs and the mouth — further development continues in the mother's pouch.

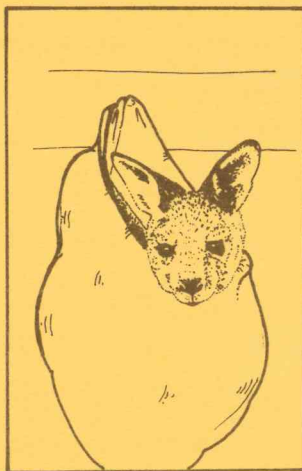
The front limbs are used by the new born kangaroos or "joeys" to pull themselves up to the pouch where they will, unaided, attach themselves to one of the mother's teats.

Young of the red and grey kangaroo live up to 12 months in the controlled environment of the pouch and even when they do venture out, they return to the pouch until they are about one year old. At this stage they weigh about 2.7 kg.

From this it is evident that a joey needs constant care and attention if it is to survive when taken prematurely from the mother.

WARMTH

Warmth is the first essential. Unable to generate enough body heat until almost ready to leave the mother's pouch, young kangaroos need artificial warmth at all times. An electric blanket or a hot water bottle is good. However, because of the difficulty in maintaining constant heat using a hot water bottle, the electric blanket is more efficient. Constant heat may also be maintained by using a screened 15-watt pilot globe mounted beneath a false bottom in a strong cardboard box. **Ensure that the globe does not touch the cardboard.** The joey is then placed in the upper compartment where the temperature should be between 30 and 32 degrees C. This can be regulated by using more or less padding or by adjusting the height of the globe. Older, fully furred joeys can be kept in a soft bag or woollen jumper which should be hung up to simulate the pouch.



FEEDING

The diet should consist of fluids to replace the mother's milk, and solid food for older animals.

Formula

The following formula is at present recommended by experts as most suitable for all young joeys.

One (1) rounded dessert spoon of Digestelact added to 100 ml of warm water.

Digestelact is a product of Sharp Laboratories and available from chemists.

NOTE:

A formula should only be changed on a veterinarians advice.

Changes will only upset the animal and may bring on diarrhoea. Kangaroo's milk is richer than cow's milk and has very little sugar so do not add sugar to the formulae. When feeding a young joey you should try to simulate the mother's nipple which is long and thin. The closest approximation is a length of valve rubber pushed through the teat of a feeding bottle. A small joey will consume 14 g — 28 g (1/2 to 1 oz) of kangaroo's milk or formula every 3 to 4 hours. A larger joey can be fed with an eye dropper or will lap. In this case let it take as much as it wants. Remember that it is very important to keep all feeding equipment clean and sterilized. It is not necessary to get up at night to feed the joey as long as you feed it before going to bed and as soon as possible in the morning.

Solid Food

The presence of teeth does not mean that solids are required, but as soon as the joey starts to explore and show interest in its surroundings, it should be given the opportunity to eat adult fare. It is a good idea to include in its bedding dry or green grass — this gives the joey the opportunity to nibble if it feels inclined. Joeys can be fed on the following solids: green grass, rose petals and leaves, fruit tree leaves, loquat leaves, maiden hair fern, dates, seeded raisins, apples, carrots, bananas, cereals, macaroni or bread. **Make sure that the leaves and grass have not been sprayed with poison.** Grass should be included as much as possible. The following mixture is also very beneficial to young kangaroos: equal quantities of yeast germ, grated nuts, cereals, chicken wheat and oatmeal sprinkled lightly with salt.

SKIN CARE

Inside the mother's pouch the joey's skin is kept moist but in the open air it tends to dry out and crack. If the joey is fully furred this does not present a problem, but if it is naked, or partly furred, baby oil should be rubbed into the skin twice daily. Many joeys at this immature stage die despite constant attention because they are not old enough to withstand conditions out of the mother's pouch.

AILMENTS

Tetanus: Kangaroos are susceptible to tetanus and it is advisable to have them immunized by your local vet.

Pneumonia: Young kangaroos may contract colds or pneumonia if exposed to cool breezes or draughts. The symptoms begin with a clear discharge from the nose which rapidly thickens and consequently breathing becomes difficult. The nasal obstruction also causes difficulty in suckling and the lack of food increases the loss of condition and progressive weakness.

Antibiotic drugs help in controlling the disease but constant, even warmth and hand feeding contribute greatly to recovery.

Scouring: This condition may occur when the joey is over-fed or given the wrong food. It is probably due to the change in the natural diet. To help the animal recover, reduce the liquid diet to 7 g — 14 g (1/4 to 1/2 an ounce) every four hours and give a dose of chlorodyne (3 drops) in half a teaspoon of water, three times a day for 3 days, if necessary. **Chlorodyne contains morphia and an overdose could cause complications.**

Colic: When young kangaroos are big enough to move around, they eat all sorts of foreign substances which may cause an obstruction in the bowel. The joey twists his body awkwardly and rolls on the ground, refusing food and water. One dessertspoon of paraffin oil (no other) given by eye dropper should relieve the condition within half an hour. Another dose may be given but if that fails consult your vet.

Blowfly Strike: When young kangaroos are not thriving they develop a dull, smelly coat which is particularly attractive to blowflies.

If the joey does become fly-blown the maggots must be removed and the affected area sprinkled with boracic acid powder. As a preventive measure the skin should be checked daily and sprinkled with boracic acid powder as necessary.

Vitamin "A" Deficiency: Symptoms are cataracts or a milky look developing in the eyes. For a large kangaroo give half a teaspoon of vitamin "A" twice daily for a week and then three times a week for a maximum of three or more weeks. Do not overdose

or give for too long as this can harm the kangaroo. For a young joey one drop twice for two or three weeks is sufficient; again do not overdose.

Vitamin "E" Deficiency: Characterised by coarse dandruff in the fur and in some cases by paralysis of the legs. Two or three vitamin "E" tablets per day should be given until cured. Excess vitamin "E" is not harmful.

GENERAL

Finally the point should be made that the orphan requires a lot of love and attention. The close physical relationship between the joey and its mother must be replaced by the foster parent. Usually, as long as the joey has not been injured, you should be able to raise it successfully. However, sometimes a joey will die despite all efforts to look after it.

In general, the smaller, naked joeys are harder to raise than the larger, furred ones.



RELEASE

It is very important that when orphaned animals are able to fend for themselves they should be released in a suitable area within their natural range.

Keeping kangaroos in captivity is generally prohibited

Licenses are issued for special purposes only and not just to keep fauna as pets. If, however, you consider that an animal you have reared is unable to look after itself, you should contact your District Wildlife Officer who will investigate.

Unless declared otherwise all fauna in W.A. is protected

For information on legal aspects contact the Wildlife Officer in your district. If the joey fails to respond to the care outlined, consult your local veterinary surgeon.



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