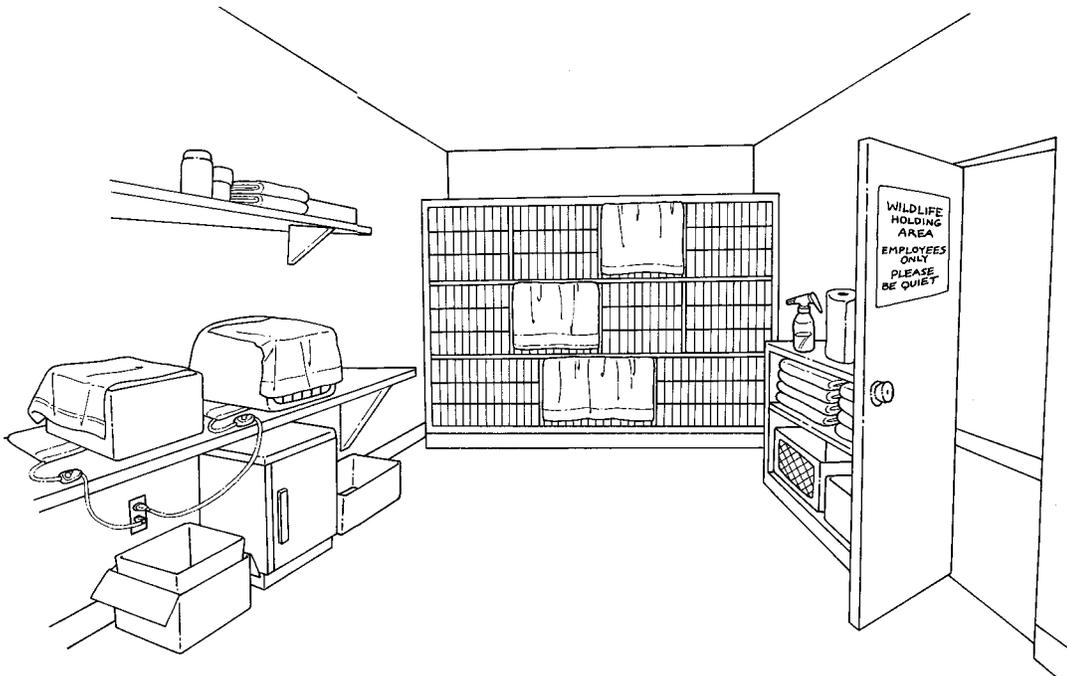


How to Temporarily House Wild Mammals

Any injured or orphaned wild animal who comes into your shelter's care is highly stressed—after all, her life in the wild was just turned upside down. Stress wreaks havoc on the animal's immune system, so you'll need to act quickly to make her as comfortable as possible. One of the best ways to do this is to "trick" the animal into thinking she's back home—or at least safe from unfamiliar creatures like us. These guidelines will help you create stress-reducing temporary housing for wild mammals.

Because wild animals have special needs, they cannot simply be stuck in cages next to cats and dogs. They need private, quiet lodging away from meowing cats, barking dogs, and other stimuli. And unlike your shelter's typical inhabitants, who generally love to be picked up or scratched behind the ears, wild animals must be handled much differently—and preferably not at all.



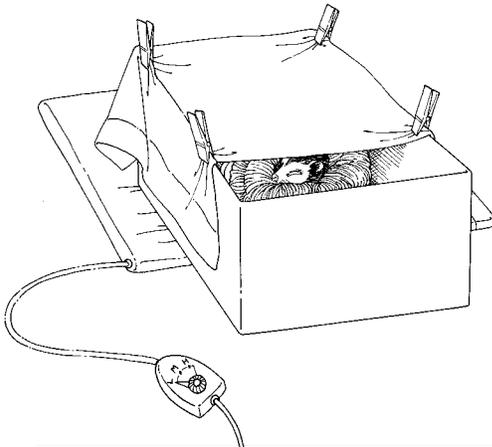
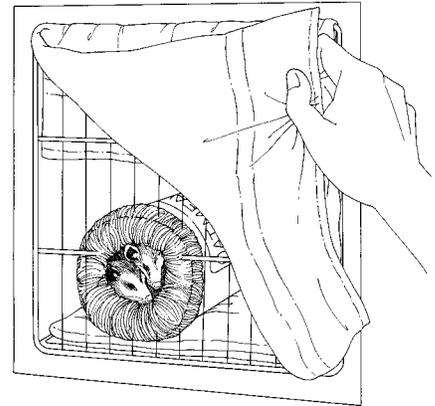
Set Up the Inn

You don't need a costly, elaborate wildlife rehab facility to temporarily care for displaced wild mammals. To meet these animals' short-term needs, turn a quiet, dark (or dimly lit) part of your shelter, such as a closet, into a "wildlife holding area" where the animals can be evaluated, monitored, and housed temporarily. The type of housing you should use depends on the species of animal, so make sure your holding area contains a variety of enclosures, such as cardboard boxes, crates, stainless-steel cages, and aquariums. The area should also have counter space for evaluating and treating the animals as well as storage space so that everything you need is right at your fingertips. To protect both people and animals, keep the area off-limits to the public.

INFANT MAMMALS

Become a Baby Sitter

Orphaned wild animals miss their mother. Provide them with a surrogate one by furnishing the enclosure with soft materials that babies can cuddle in, under, or next to. Here's a popular tip that can help some young mammals: Turn a fake-fur garment sleeve inside out, sew one end shut, and then slip the sleeve inside a tubular container. (The container provides support to prevent collapse, especially if several animals are sharing the same sleeve.) Then slide the youngsters inside so they can curl and fall asleep.



Turn On the Heat

Young animals need to be kept warm at all times. Set a heating pad on low and place it under—never in—one half of the animal's enclosure so that the animal can move away from the heat source after she is warm enough. To prevent the animal from becoming overheated, rest a thermometer against the enclosure so you can monitor and adjust the temperature.

ADULT MAMMALS



Create a Safe House

A stressed wild animal may try to escape from a cage by banging against it or chewing on it, possibly injuring herself in the process. Fortunately, you can prevent injury and reduce stress with a few simple modifications and visual barriers. First, cover the cage with a blanket or towels, making sure the cage is adequately ventilated. Next, create a den or hiding area by cutting a small "entrance way" into a cardboard box or hollowed log, then placing the "den" upside down in the cage.

Add Some Finishing Touches

After the animal has calmed down, she'll want something to do. Give the cage some of the comforts of home by adding tree branches, rocks, and logs that the animal can chew, sit on, play with, hide under, and rearrange. Turning a cold, barren cage into a comfort zone for a wild animal doesn't cost much time or money. For the animal, though, it makes a world of difference.

