

HeraldTimesOnline.com

Find a fawn? Don't pet it, don't feed it, don't move it

Experts say baby animals that seem abandoned usually aren't

By Dawn Hewitt
June 9, 2011

331-4377 | dhewitt@heraldt.com

The newborn fawn hiding under the shrubbery in your backyard probably has not been abandoned and doesn't need your help, said Laurie Ringquist, Bloomington's director of Animal Care and Control.

Ringquist said the department has received at least a dozen calls in the past week or so regarding fawns thought to be abandoned — and probably more, since calls that come in during the evening and on weekends aren't cataloged.

She said it is natural and healthy for does to “‘park’ their fawns in places they think are safe — whether we agree with them or not. They're often nearby, watching as they graze. It's normal to see a fawn by itself.”

“If the fawn isn't injured and its mom isn't lying dead in road,” it probably doesn't need human help, Ringquist said. “Don't pet it, don't feed it, don't move it. Just leave it alone.”

She said in a situation where the fawn is in danger or its mother is dead, call animal care and control, and if the situation warrants, an animal officer will be sent out.

“Some officers have been doing this for 30 years. They know what's normal and what to do” when the animal truly needs help, Ringquist said.

The joint Bloomington-Monroe County Deer Task Force issued a press release because of the number of reports of fawns thought to be abandoned recently.

“If you find a fawn like this, leave the fawn alone knowing that a concerned and anxious mother is nearby and will take care of the young deer once you leave,” the release states.

To ensure safety of both people and deer, the task force offers the following tips:

Keep children and pets away from the fawn and any other deer. Deer are not inherently aggressive. However, like most mothers, a doe can become aggressive if she perceives that her young are being threatened.

If you suspect a fawn has been orphaned do not attempt to move or feed it. Feeding fawns cow's milk is a common mistake that can kill a fawn. Feeding fawns must be left up to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator.

The best way to make sure a fawn is truly orphaned is to check back periodically from a distance where a mother will not see you. Please call WildCare at 323-1313 for advice. If maggots are visible on the fawn (usually on its belly or under its tail), the fawn has been alone for at least two days and WildCare should be called immediately.

If you suspect that a fawn (or any deer) has been injured, do not attempt to move it. Instead, call Bloomington Animal Care and Control at 349-3492.

Susan Davis, executive director of Wild Care Inc., a wildlife rehabilitation center on Hartstrait Road west of Bloomington, advises leaving fawns alone for 24-48 hours and watching from a safe distance to see if the doe returns. Odds are, she will within that period. If not, call Wild Care.

As of Tuesday, however, the center's deer pens were full. "We have limited capacity," Davis said.

Jennifer Cunningham, the center's manager and deer team leader said the 11 fawns Wild Care is tending were found with their mothers dead nearby, or were alone for more than 48 hours.

Cunningham said when she gets a call about an abandoned fawn, she'll do a walk-through with the caller, and ask the caller to "give mom a chance to come back." Sometimes till dusk or dawn, or even longer.

She said she usually gets a follow-up phone call, saying "mom came back."

[Read more about WildCare and baby animals.](#)

Fawns in danger

If a fawn has been alone for 24 to 48 hours or longer, is in an unsafe location or is visibly injured, or if its mother is injured or dead, call Bloomington Animal Care and Control at 349-3492 or WildCare Inc. at 323-1212.



John A Weakley shared this photo of a newborn deer in his father's backyard in the Autumn Grove neighborhood.



Janice Rickert | Herald-Times

Copyright: HeraldTimesOnline.com 2011