What to feed a baby deer

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Fridge cheat sheet

BEFORE YOU FEED ANYTHING

1. A fawn alone is normal. Does leave fawns hidden for up to 12 hours.
2. It may be orphaned if it cries nonstop for hours, lies on its side, has flies, maggots or wounds, or a dead doe is nearby.
3. Moved it? Put it back where you found it within 24 hours and leave.
4. Do not feed it anything, not even water.
5. If a rehabber says to bring it in, keep it in a box in a warm, dark, quiet place away from pets and children.
6. Keeping or raising a fawn without a permit is illegal in most states.

Find a wildlife rehabilitator near you: ahnow.org

Is it really orphaned? (Maine S.P.O.T. check): maine.gov

✓ Safe staples

- **Colostrum** – First 24–48 hours only, 5 feeds a day
- **Fawn milk replacer** – Deer formula, mixed exactly to the label
- **Goat milk replacer** – Feed-store goat replacer, mixed to the label
- **Lamb milk replacer** – Mix as for lambs
- **Browse leaves and twigs** – Fresh native branches, always on hand
- **Clover and dandelion** – Hand-picked fresh greens daily
- **Fresh grass** – Part of the weaning diet
- **Deer or goat starter pellets** – 16–18% protein starter, free choice
- **Water** – Bowl once on solids, never squirted in

! Small amounts only

- **Fresh goat's milk** – Only if a rehabber says so
- **Electrolytes (Pedialyte)** – Rehabber-directed rehydration only
- **Alfalfa hay** – Good alfalfa only, as part of weaning
- **Acorns** – Weaned deer only, as a supplement
- **Oats** – Weaned deer only, a little

⊗ Never feed

- **Cow's milk** – Causes sickness and dehydration
- **Human baby formula** – Wrong nutrition for a fawn
- **Corn** – Acidosis can kill within 24–72 hours
- **Bread** – Kitchen scrap, upsets the rumen
- **Apples** – Hard to digest, sugar shock
- **Carrots** – Not a fawn food
- **Banana** – Sugary, not a fawn food
- **Grapes** – Sugary, not a fawn food
- **Peanuts and birdseed** – Rich food shocks deer digestion
- **Cheese and dairy** – Dairy makes fawns sick
- **Lettuce and cabbage** – Low nutrition, Maine says don't
- **Potatoes** – Linked to malnutrition and death

Feeding schedule

Age	Looks like	Food	Amount	How often
0–2 days	Spotted newborn, about 4–8 lb at birth	Colostrum (deer, goat, sheep or cow)	30–40 mL per kg per feed (Merck)	5 feeds a day
2 days–1 week	Hides alone between feeds; doubles its birth weight by about 2 weeks	Fawn milk replacer, or goat or lamb milk replacer	Fox Valley label: 16 oz a day in total. No more than 3% of body weight per feed (Milk Products)	4–6 feeds a day
1–2 weeks	Still hides; starts nibbling plants near the end of week 2	Milk replacer	Fox Valley: 24–30 oz a day. Merck: up to 300 mL a feed. About 10–20% of body weight a day	3–4 feeds a day
2–4 weeks	Starts chewing cud; strong enough to follow the doe by about 3 weeks	Milk replacer, plus browse, starter pellets and a water bowl	Merck: up to 460 mL a feed. Solids free choice	3 feeds a day
4–8 weeks	About 3 times its birth weight at 1 month; still spotted	Milk replacer, browse, clover and dandelion, starter pellets, water	Fox Valley: 30–35 oz a day. Merck: 480 mL once a day at 7 weeks	2–3 feeds a day, down to 1 by about 7 weeks
8–14 weeks	Can live without milk from about 10 weeks	Browse, greens, starter pellets, alfalfa hay, water	Fox Valley: about 15 oz of formula once a day until weaned	Once a day, then stop; fully weaned at 12–14 weeks (Fox Valley)
14 weeks and up	Spots fade at 90–120 days as the winter coat grows	Browse, forage, starter pellets, water	Free choice	Eats on its own

Feeding log (weigh before feeding, same time each day)

Date	Time	Weight (g)	Amount (ml)	Peed/pooped	Notes