

Armadillo Care

Healthcare Advice for Armadillos

So you have an armadillo on your hands — what do you do? Hopefully this page will help you.

DISCLAIMER: The advice and information presented here is not intended to be a substitute for medical care from a licensed veterinarian or wildlife rehabilitator. Caring for a wild animal may be risky both to yourself and to the animal. Caring for a wild animal without a wildlife rehabilitation license may be illegal. Always check your local rules and regulations, proceed with caution, seek sound medical advice, and follow the guidelines below at your own risk.

Baby armadillos

If you find a baby armadillo, the best thing you can do for it is to ***leave it alone***. Odds are that most of the time the armadillo's mother is nearby, and she will take care of the baby herself. If you know for sure that the mother is not there to help — that is, in cases where the mother has been killed by a car, etc. — use the following list as a guideline to care for the abandoned or orphan armadillo pup.

Finding an authorized care facility

A local wildlife rescue center, a licensed wildlife rehabilitator, or a veterinarian who is experienced with wild animals is the best and safest option both for you and for the armadillo. In many places, keeping a wild animal in your home is illegal, even if your intentions are to help it. The average person does not have the training to successfully raise an orphaned animal and release into the wild, with any chance of survival. As a surrogate “mother” to these animals, you will need to know how to teach them to live on their own, and be prepared to deal with any emergency medical care. I *strongly* urge you to take any orphaned animals to a rehab / rescue center, both for your own protection and for the well-being of the animal. If you can't find a center in your phone book, you can try [this online directory of rehab centers](#).

Caring for the armadillo yourself

Only do this if you are unable to find a rehab center willing to accept the animal! The best chance for an orphaned or abandoned armadillo pup is a licensed wildlife rehab center or experienced vet.

I. Feeding:

- i. For animals of nursing age, use kitten formula, and feed the armadillo with an eyedropper. Be **very careful** not to force-feed the armadillo pup! They can easily over-eat, and this will cause severe gastric distress or death.
- ii. For older animals, moist canned cat food will provide all the nutrients required to keep the armadillo healthy. However, you **must** supplement this with natural food items if the armadillo is to be successfully released into the wild.

II. Foraging:

- i. You will need to train the armadillo to find its own food. You can start by supplementing its diet with natural foods, including:
 - Bait worms (from a bait shop, naturally)
 - Meal worms (bait or pet stores generally carry these)
 - Grubs (you can sometimes get them from stores, or dig them out of lawns or rotten wood)
 - Ants (catch them in a jar, or just find an anthill and let the armadillo loose on them!)
 - Vegetation (lettuce, fruit, etc.)
- ii. In addition to showing it *what* to eat, you'll need to teach it *how* to find this food. Start by burying the food in a shallow pan of dirt, and let the armadillo find the items on its own. As it gets larger, you'll need to let it outside to forage on its own, preferably in a large outdoor enclosure like a fenced-in yard or dog pen.
- iii. Make sure the armadillo feels comfortable finding its own food before you release it. It is probably best to let it out in your yard, and leave food out for it in the evenings if it is possible to do so without attracting other guests, like stray cats or raccoons. If you were successful, the armadillo will eventually settle in nearby, or will wander away from your yard into the wild.

III. Releasing the armadillo:

- i. Make sure the armadillo feels comfortable finding its own food before you release it. It is probably best to let it out in your yard, and leave food out for it in the evenings if it is possible to do so without attracting other guests, like stray cats or

raccoons. If you were successful, the armadillo will eventually settle in nearby, or will wander away from your yard into the wild.

- ii. If you can't release the armadillo in a place that you can visit it to provide supplemental food until it settles into its new home, try to release it in a place that will give it everything it needs to survive:
 - Access to water, like a pond or stream
 - Brush or other undergrowth to hide in
 - Open, grassy areas to forage in
 - Plenty of room to roam around in

Please understand that raising a baby armadillo is a very tricky thing to do. Although armadillos generally do well in captivity, armadillo pups are very prone to suddenly and rapidly declining and dying, for no apparent reason. Do your best, but be prepared for the worst, and do not hesitate to call an expert for help if you do not feel that you can handle the situation on your own! If you cannot successfully release the armadillo into the wild, refer to the next section to understand what it means to care for a grown armadillo at home.

Adult armadillos

A healthy, adult armadillo will not generally need help from a human, but you might find yourself in a situation that calls for you to care for an armadillo. Although I think that armadillos should not be kept as pets, I do feel that it is important for people to know how to care for one, just in case.

- **Armadillos need room to forage and dig**, and they will not be happy unless you allow them to do so. A large outdoor enclosure such as a fenced-in yard or dog pen should work. Be aware that an active armadillo just might dig its way out of a pen, so keep an eye on it.
- **Moist canned cat food will give an armadillo everything it needs to stay healthy**, but this should be supplemented with “natural” foods like bait worms, grubs, fruit, etc. A wild armadillo's diet is fairly variable, and you should try to keep a captive armadillo on as similar a diet as possible.
- **Armadillos love water**, and they will be happier if they have access to a wading pool (or better yet a pond or stream) to swim in. Water helps keep them cool, and it gives them exercise.
- **Cold weather can be dangerous for armadillos**. Keep them inside if possible when

weather turns cold, especially if there is a hard frost or snow. A few days of extremely cold weather in a row can be deadly to an armadillo that cannot find shelter.

- **Armadillos generally do well in captivity** and adjust to human presence with little sign of stress or other health issues. However, overcrowding of armadillos in captivity has led to fighting and severe injuries in some instances, so do not try to keep too many animals in a small area.
- **Licensing may be required to keep an armadillo** in your state, province or country. Please do not attempt to keep or care for armadillos or any other wild animals unless you are legally permitted to do so.

Remember that laws in your area may make it illegal for you to own, keep, or care for an armadillo — check your local laws and statutes before proceeding!

