



## CARING FOR A PROTECTED NATIVE ANIMAL Legal Requirements in SA

- A permit MUST be obtained from the Fauna Permit Dept. (Fines apply)
- Male kangaroos must be castrated by a veterinary surgeon at an age when they are still in the pouch.
- It is illegal to release any hand raised native animal without submitting a plan to Fauna Permit Department otherwise they must be housed in a correctly fenced area and cared for the rest of their lives, for kangaroos this is approx 20 years
- A person without prior experience should have a qualified support person or group.

**Remember this is a wild animal that is not used to human interaction.**

A newly orphaned native animal will be suffering shock and stress from loss of mum, loss of warmth and loss of nourishment.

### **IMMEDIATE NEEDS ARE:**

- **A warm, quiet, dark area.**
- **Feeding is not a priority, get advice first.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
NATIVE ANIMAL NETWORK  
08 8388 6944**

**Murray Bridge Veterinary Clinic  
08 8532 2333**

## A PUGGLE TALE

We often have community members bring in hurt or orphaned native animals and birds. As part of our service to the community, Murray Bridge Veterinary Clinic provides advice and support to care for the animal or places them with qualified carers. Recently a family stopped to check an echidna which had been hit by the car in front of them.

*They traveled all the way from Cambrai to bring in the mother with a baby in her pouch. Unfortunately the mother died before they arrived at the clinic but the young one in her pouch was unhurt.*

Echidnas are one of two very special Australian marsupials called 'monotremes' (the other being the platypus). Their young are called 'puggles'. These amazing animals lay eggs, have pouches and suckle their young. It is nearly impossible for even an expert to tell the sex of an echidna as females don't form a pouch until mating season and are not thought to have young until between 7 and 12 years of age.

In mating season males will form an echidna train, with up to 6 males following behind the female until she chooses one to mate with. The female lies on her back to lay an egg the size of a grape, which she then rolls up her stomach and contracts her stomach muscles to form a pouch around it. The egg hatches in 8 to 12 days with the young being very basic and unformed. It takes 8 newly hatched puggles to weigh the same as a 5 cent piece.

When the puggle, now named Penelope was rescued she was 198gms, had her eyes and ears shut and was pink without spines.



We estimated she was around 35 days old. In a few weeks, her mother would have taken her from the pouch and placed her in a burrow to avoid having a spiky puggle in her pouch.

We put Penny in a pouch for security initially and as she has grown she has moved to a plastic box with leaf litter in it. Unlike other marsupials she does not need warmth with echidnas having a low body temp of 31 degrees. A mother echidna doesn't have teats and the puggle will feed by licking milk secreted through her skin.

To feed Penelope we had to put milk in the palm of our hand and teach her to slurp it up. Initially she wanted to turn upside down to drink, as she would have in the pouch. Puggles only feed every few days in the pouch and in the burrow often go up to 7 days between feeds.

When they do feed they consume up to half of their body weight. They take about an hour to slurp this up with little naps in between. Penelope's body expands like a tick during feeding!



Penelope is now around 90 days old, weighs 380gms and is grey and covered with 1cm long spines. Her eyes and ears are also open. She is quite inquisitive but very wary of loud noises. At this stage we are still researching where Penelope will go when she is older, as release is not a good option. Echidnas are very solitary animals often having a home foraging range of over 40 hectares.

**Our thanks to the Echidna Research Center on Kangaroo Island and Wombaroo Replacement Milks for their advice and support.**