

CROW Case of the Week: Eastern Gray Squirrels
by Brian Johnson



On September 17 Josh Hamilton brought in three baby squirrels who had a most unusual case history: they were found in the doghouse of a pit bull in Fort Myers. No one knows how they got in there. Obviously the pit bull did not climb up a tree to get their nest, and the babies were so tiny that they probably did not have the capacity to crawl as far as the doghouse from any of the trees on the property. As implausible as it may first seem, Dr. Amber McNamara thinks the pit bull may actually have taken them into the doghouse himself, using the utmost care and concern.

"Pit bulls have a reputation as gruff and rough, but these squirrels didn't have a scratch on them," said Dr. Amber. "I assume he took them into the doghouse, and was keeping them warm."

However toasty the doghouse may have been, they were emaciated and on the brink of death by the time they got to CROW.

"When I opened up the box and looked at them it was so pitiful – they were lying on their side, they were so weak they could barely breathe," said Dr. McNamara. "They were skinny and very dehydrated."

Staff gave them Rebound, an electrolyte solution that smells like chicken broth, and placed them in a warm aquarium on a heating pad. The weakest squirrel died overnight.

The next ten days was touch and go as they remained in critical condition. CROW staff had the tricky job of getting the 60-gram creatures enough nutrition without overfeeding them. They gained a total of just 10 grams during this period.

With supportive care, however, they survived.

"Once they hit 90 grams, they really picked up," said Dr. Amber. "You could tell they wanted the food, really wanted milk."

They were put in with other squirrel babies and thrived. During the day they feasted on bananas, grapes, squash, corn, broccoli and monkey biscuits with milk.

"We moved them outdoors on October 5, and by that time they looked great, you couldn't know what a rough start to life they had had," said Dr. Amber.

On their last few days at the clinic they were given nuts, which gave them a chance to practice opening them, and on October 19 the two girls were released back to Fort Myers.

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