

CROW Case of the Week: Armadillo
by Brian Johnson



Early in the morning on June 25 Sanibel resident Rose Dakos was walking her dog, Gigi, when she saw an armadillo slumped in the grass in her neighbor's yard. She thought he might be dead, but as she approached he made a labored effort to run away.

Rose took Gigi back to her house, got a box and towel and returned to the scene, where she ran into her neighbors, Marilyn Finch and Vicky Ross, who were also out walking their dogs. She told them about the armadillo and together they got the injured animal into the box.

The three hopped into Rose's car and drove up to CROW, arriving during Morning Rounds. "We wanted to make

sure he was okay, we were so worried about the poor little thing," said Rose.

Dr. Amber McNamara checked the armadillo in. "She had wounds across the back of her neck, it was quite swollen and abraded – we assumed she was hit by a car, but there were no marks on her shield."

The 7.5-pound armadillo was anxious and uncomfortable. She would try to stand upright, then fall over on her side. Staff gave her substantial doses of pain medication and valium to settle her down, and she spent most of the rest of the day buried in soft towels in ICU.

"The next day she was better, but she still had this very odd presentation," said McNamara. "She could move her limbs, but they were very uncoordinated. She would crawl two steps, then fall over."

Staff put soothing CEH cream on her neck and continued with the pain medication and anti-inflammatories. On Day 3 she ate an earthworm.

She made "tiny improvements" during the course of the week, but her appetite returned more quickly than her coordination. "It got to the point where she could stand up and eat a whole tub of earthworms and then fall over and go to sleep" said McNamara.

Staff go to Wal-Mart periodically and buy out all the boxes of earthworms in the fishing department. The armadillos can run through dozens of cartons in no time.

By Day 8 she was walking on tip toes. "She was still in pain – perhaps due to a pinched nerve, she was protecting her neck area." Dr. Amber tried acupuncture on her neck, but the armadillo wiggled so much that the needles popped out.

Nevertheless the armadillo made enough progress to win a transfer to the outdoor enclosure on July 4. "She started digging right away, and her wounds were healing well," said Dr. Amber.

She was now going through six cartons of earthworms (approximately 150 worms) per day. Dr.

Amber noted that she could now hold the worms with her feet before eating them, as armadillos like to do; when she arrived, this was impossible for her.

On July 13 CROW released her back on Sanibel to her neighborhood on the east end.

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