

BEAR CUB PROGRAM

Cubs are usually born in January or February and leave the den weighing at least five pounds. If everything goes well, they stay with mum for about eighteen months, learning the ways of the wild. Sometimes things do not go well; the mother is killed and the cubs are orphaned.

Best case scenario: They are rescued and brought to NIWRA.



Initial physical exams take place when a new cub arrives at the centre.



Entering the nursery requires disinfecting footwear.

A very small cub requires intensive care. Following an initial physical exam, the Animal Care Team launches special handling protocols:

- A special bear milk replacement is prepared for hand-feeding
- All equipment is sterilized; gowns and latex gloves must be worn and footwear must be disinfected when entering the nursery
- A cozy area with a heat lamp is set up in a nursery room
- All vital statistics are meticulously recorded

As always, everyone at the centre was very excited to meet the tiny patient and hoping for the best possible outcome. Although only the Animal Care Team can have any physical contact with the cub. Others can monitor its progress from closed-circuit TVs.



This cub has been named 'Crumpet' by Derek, one of our Animal Care Technicians.

What does the life of a bear cub admitted to the centre look like?

1. First stop: The Nursery

Here, the baby bear has a platform for a bed covered with cozy blankets and a heat lamp above. While in the nursery, the cub will begin to recover from any prior physical issues, and if necessary, make the switch from hand-feeding to lapping its food from a bowl. If possible, another cub may be placed with it to help with socializing and coping with the loss of its mother.

3. Final stop: The Pre-release Area

When ready, the cub is moved to an open-air enclosure set up with more smells and enhancement activities that pique the cub's natural curiosity, help develop its physical strength and agility, and teach it to fend for itself.

During the fourteen to sixteen months of a cub's stay at the centre, it will grow to be healthy, strong, and ready to return to the wild.

2. Next stop: The Juvenile Area

At this stage, human contact becomes limited as it is critical that bears do not become habituated to people. The Juvenile Area is equipped with obstacles and challenges to encourage play and exploration.

4. The Day of Release

When a cub is ready to be released, it is extremely exciting! The cub is fitted with a tracking collar during its final physical examination. He or she is transported to a carefully chosen release area that is as close as possible to where the cub was first found.

Everyone at the centre agrees that there is nothing more exciting than the release of an animal back to the wild! With the help of our wonderful supporters, NIWRA can continue to do this important work.