



SeaWorld/Busch Gardens Baby Animals

Background Information

About breeding. Animals reproduce to preserve their species. Some animals, like dolphins, just have one baby at a time. Others, like fishes, can have thousands. The amount of time it takes to raise a baby and the way it's raised varies among groups of animals. In general, baby animals are born at the time of year when they have the best chance of survival—good weather and plenty of food.

Breeding is generally considered by biologists to be an indication of whether an animal is healthy and comfortable in its surroundings. Landmark births and hatchings occur regularly at Sea World. Keepers at Sea World also care for injured and orphaned baby animals that are rescued from the coast. Here are some baby stories:

Dolphin babies are called calves. Like other mammals, dolphins nurse their young. A mother dolphin's milk is 20% to 30% fat. (Cow's milk that people drink is only about 1% to 4% fat!) A dolphin calf nurses for 12 to 18 months, and begins to eat some fish at about three months.

Sea lion babies bleat like little lambs. Sea lion babies are called pups. They are active and energetic, and eager to explore the world around them. California sea lion pups weigh about 14 pounds at birth. They nurse for four to eight months or more but begin eating fish at about two months.

Shark babies are miniature replicas of the adults. There's no such thing as a good shark mother! Shark babies, called pups, are on their own after they're born. Some pups hatch from eggs. Others are born live. They begin eating within days of their birth.

Most baby birds are called chicks. Like flamingos, most chicks are covered with soft fluffy feathers when they hatch. (Others, like parrots, hatch naked.) Flamingo chicks have gray feathers. They gradually acquire their pink plumage as they approach their third birthday.



SeaWorld San Diego hatched its first emperor chick in 1980.

Sea otter babies have long, shaggy fur. The tiny baby, called a pup, is only three to five pounds when it's born. A mother sea otter carries her baby on her chest, cradling it in her forelimbs. Sometimes, she leaves the pup wrapped in a patch of kelp while she dives for food.

All About Baby Shamu

Newborns discoveries. In 1985, a killer whale was born at Sea World of Florida. It was the first killer whale ever to be born and thrive in a zoological park, and it was named Baby Shamu. Since then, 14 calves have been born at Sea World parks, and we look forward to more in the future.

How big is a killer whale calf at birth? Newborns are about 8 ft. long and weigh about 300 to 400 lb. They're born in the water. Deliveries can be either head-first or tail-first. Killer whale calves nurse under water, close to the surface. They nurse for about 5 to 10 seconds at a time, several times an hour, 24 hours a day. Calves nurse for about 11 months.

When do calves start eating fish? A killer whale calf's teeth erupt when it's about three months old. It begins to eat fish at about four months. By the age of one year, killer whale calves at Sea World eat 50 to 60 lb. of herring, smelt, and squid every day.

As we learn more, so can you. Having killer whales here helps us to understand their world. Researchers continue to study their vocalizations, interactions, learning rates, and biology. The more we know about these whales, the better we will understand their role- and ours- in the ocean.



Killer whale calves nurse for about 11 months.