APRIL’S TOPIC:

ANIMAL BABIES

- Some animals are born alive, while others hatch from eggs.
- Frogs, toads, salamanders, turtles, birds and most insects hatch from eggs.
- Baby mammals are born alive and drink milk from their mothers.
- Some animal babies are born helpless. Others are born completely capable of caring for themselves.
- Opossums are marsupials and carry their babies in a pouch for several months after birth. When they are older their mother carries them on her back.
- **Leave Wildlife Wild (see article below):** Young wild animals are rarely abandoned. The wildlife parents hide when you get near them, and they often leave the babies to look for food.

*Book Suggestions: Chickens Aren’t The Only Ones, by Ruth Heller  The Very Hungry Caterpillar, by Eric Carle*
LEAVE WILDLIFE WILD
DON'T TAKE WILDLIFE FROM THEIR NATURAL HABITAT

Spring brings with it the birth of wild animals, such as birds, rabbits, deer, and squirrels. Kind-hearted people often want to adopt young animals they find because they think they have been orphaned or abandoned. Most times they have not.

“Young wild animals are rarely abandoned or orphaned,” said MDC State Wildlife Veterinarian Sherri Russell. “The wildlife parent is afraid of people and will retreat when you approach. If the young animal is left alone, the parent will usually return. Also, parent animals cannot constantly attend to their young and often spend many hours each day away from their young gathering food.”

Russell added that bird chicks are common animals people want to help.

“If you see a bird chick on the ground and it has feathers, leave it alone. It is a fledgling and the parents are nearby keeping an eye on it,” she explained. “If you find one that is featherless, it probably fell out of the nest. Return it to the nest if you can, or at least near the nest.”

Another common problem is dogs catching rabbit kits and mowers running over nests.

“Wild rabbits seldom survive in captivity and actually can die of fright from being handled,” Russell explained. “Even if they are injured, return young rabbits to the nest or the general nest area. The mother will most likely return.”

She added most wild mothers do not abandon their young because of a human smell on them, and most young wild animals do not survive in captivity.

“While people may have good intentions, the care and rehabilitation of wild animals requires special training, knowledge, facilities, care — and permits,” she said. “Wild animals, if they are to survive in captivity, often require highly specialized care. Without such care, they will remain in poor health and may eventually die. And it is illegal to possess many wild animals without a valid state or federal permit.”

To learn more, visit short.mdc.mo.gov/ZNq.