



Milk for Echidna

Also used for Platypus.

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|-----------------|-------------|
|  | Echidna Milk Replacer Early Lactation | | Analysis | |
| | For young less than 30 days old. Furless. Pinkish-grey skin. Eyes closed. Pouch bound. | | Solids | 210g/litre |
| | | | Protein | 34% |
| | Faeces: Custard to toothpaste consistency. | | Fat | 38% |
| | | | Carbohydrate | 16% |
| | Pack size: 210g | | Energy | 4.9MJ/litre |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|-----------------|-------------|
|  | Echidna Milk Replacer Late Lactation | | Analysis | |
| | For young greater than 50 days old. Fur: By 60 days finely furred with spines emerging. | | Solids | 360g/litre |
| | | | Protein | 32% |
| | Faeces: Toothpaste to soft then firm pellets. | | Fat | 42% |
| | | | Carbohydrate | 13% |
| | Pack size: 250g, 1.25kg | | Energy | 8.8MJ/litre |

Age Estimation

Individual echidnas show considerable variation in body weight and growth rate with age. Echidna young leave the pouch at similar ages (around 45-60 days) but at very different sizes. Offspring of larger females tend to have a faster growth rate and are heavier at than those of smaller females. The following growth chart therefore provides two columns of weight for age, one for smaller animals, the other for larger animals. If a particular animal does not fit one weight range then it may fall between the columns, or outside either weight range.

Feeding Guidelines

Echidna can suckle vigorously and the high nutrient content of the milk means that young are fed infrequently. In the wild burrow young (>50 days) are only suckled by their mother approximately once every 5 days. (Rismiller PD and McKelvey MW, 2009. Activity and behaviour of lactating echidnas. *Aust J Zoology*.)

Digestion of milk is slow so the contents of the stomach need to be fully emptied before the next feed. For Early Lactation Echidnas we recommend to feed every 36 hours, and for Late Lactation Echidnas the feed intervals should be at least 2 days apart. This time frame may be further extended as the animal gets older.

Short-Beaked Echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*)

| Milk | Age (days) | Body Length (mm) | Small Animals | | Large Animals | | Notes |
|------------|------------|------------------|---------------|----------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|--|
| | | | Weight (g) | Feed ¹ (mL/day) | Weight (g) | Feed ¹ (mL/day) | |
| Early | 10 | 55 | 7 | 6 | 10 | 7 | |
| | 15 | 70 | 20 | 9 | 25 | 10 | |
| | 20 | 85 | 39 | 12 | 45 | 12 | |
| | 25 | 100 | 60 | 14 | 65 | 14 | |
| | 30 | 115 | 82 | 15 | 95 | 16 | |
| Transition | 35 | 129 | 104 | 20 | 130 | 20 | 15mL Early + 5ml Late |
| | 40 | 143 | 126 | 20 | 168 | 20 | 10mL Early + 10ml Late |
| | 45 | 157 | 148 | 20 | 208 | 20 | 5mL Early + 15ml Late |
| Late | 50 | 170 | 170 | 20 | 250 | 23 | Fine fur/spines may be present |
| | 60 | Not Valid | 215 | 22 | 345 | 26 | Emerged from pouch |
| | 80 | | 305 | 25 | 540 | 31 | |
| | 100 | | 395 | 28 | 750 | 35 | |
| | 120 | | 485 | 30 | 970 | 39 | Introduce Solid Food |
| | 150 | | 620 | 32 | 1300 | 43 | Start Weaning |
| | 180 | | 755 | 35 | 1670 | 48 | Fully weaned [180-210 days] ² |

Notes

1. Feed is given as average **daily** volume, so multiply this number by the number of days between each feed.
2. Tasmanian animals tend to have a faster growth rate and wean earlier (around 150 days).

Weaning

Echidnas should be fully weaned at about 6 to 7 months of age and the body weight at this time may be anywhere from 700g to 2kg. Prior to weaning solid food may be introduced into the diet. Start by mixing small amounts of **Wombaroo Small Carnivore Food** into the milk. Over the next month, slowly increase the amount of solids while decreasing the amount of milk. During this time the mix should change in consistency from a thin porridge to a thick paste. This will prepare the young for introduction to the adult diet.

Introducing Adult Diet

Mix about 9 parts of **Wombaroo Small Carnivore Food** with 1 part of finely crushed termite mound or similar soil material, including some termites if possible. Slowly mix with water to the desired consistency.