



**Tawny owls**

**Short-term care for vets in practice**

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# First aid: oral rehydration therapy

## Indication:

Birds which are dehydrated - those which are thin or are likely to have not eaten for some time.

## Method:

Owls have no crop, so should be given fluids by gavage, using a gavage tube, a lamb feeder tube, or tubing with a rounded end (e.g. a dog urinary catheter).

Any oral electrolyte suitable for small animals can be used, and should be given warmed, at a rate of 2.5% of the owl's weight (roughly 10 mls for an adult owl).



## First aid: oral rehydration therapy

With the owl held upright, the beak should be held open with a thumb and index finger placed at the commissures from above/behind. A well lubricated tube can then be passed down the right side of the owl's mouth, avoiding the glottis at the back of the tongue, to the level of the caudal end of the keel (roughly the midpoint of the body). Extending the neck gently will help ensure the tube passes more easily.

The syringe should be depressed slowly, to ensure fluids do not back up into the owl's mouth.

Avoid:

Avoid holding the beak shut while administering the fluids; the lower beak must be able to move to enable the bird to swallow freely in the event that the fluids back up into its mouth.



## Short-term care: tail guard

Tawny owls have relatively long tail feathers which are easily damaged (broken and contaminated with faeces) when the bird is kept in a confined space (such as a pet carrier/kennel).

Method:

An autoclave bag makes a suitable short-term tail guard. Cut to length, then apply with the plastic surface facing the owl's legs, using one inch micropore attached to the tail feathers to hold it in place.

Avoid:

Avoid accidentally involving the wing feathers in the tail guard, or using anything other than micropore: the adhesive in other bandages can irreparably damage the feather structure.



## Short-term care: beak damage

Tawny owls may injure their upper beaks attempting to escape from pet carriers/kennels with a metal barred door. There is damage to the cere, occasionally exposing the underlying bone.

A towel can be hung down the inside of the wire door of the pet carrier/kennel to provide seclusion and prevent beak damage.



## Appropriate rehabilitation facilities

A large aviary is necessary for flight assessment and building fitness. (The video shows the final stage of the rehabilitation of tawny owlets, in a purpose-built flight aviary.)





# Thank you

