Hibernation

What is Hibernation?

Hibernation is when some animals find a safe, warm place and then fall into a very deep sleep. This is so that they survive the cold winter months. Winter is a difficult time for some animals to find food. It can also get so cold that many animals die.

When animals hibernate, their body temperature goes down and their breathing slows down too. Before they sleep, they spend many days eating as much as they can. They will then store all this food in their bodies as fat, which keeps them alive through the winter.

When the temperature outside gets a bit warmer, in the springtime, the animals that are hibernating begin to wake up.

Did you know?

Even some insects hibernate. Ladybirds hibernate in large groups and they all cluster together. They survive the winter by sleeping under bark and leaf litter.

Animals that Hibernate

Hedgehogs: These little mammals hibernate from November or December until March or April. They sleep under hedges or old rabbit burrows. They make a bed for themselves using dry, old leaves.



Bears: Some bears hibernate for just a few weeks, others for 6 months or more. They spend time hunting for a good place to hibernate. They eat enormous amounts of food as they are large animals and need enough fat to keep them alive through the long winter.

Queen Bumblebee: The rest of the bee colony will die during the winter, but the queen bumblebee can survive as long as she hibernates. She digs down in the ground about 10cm from the surface. Then she makes a hole and she hibernates in the soil. When she wakes up about 6 months later, she finds a new place to build her nest and a whole new team of bees begins.



Fascinating Bat Fact

Some hibernating bats will only take a breath every two hours.

Fascinating Frog Fact

When wood frogs hibernate they actually stop breathing and their heart stops beating. Ice crystals form in their blood with the lack of movement and cold weather. They appear to be dead.

