



# California Wildlife Center

## Patient of the Week

January 9, 2026

### Grounded for Recovery



Burns on foot of California Ground Squirrel.



Patient's feet bandaged for protection and to help with healing.

In late December, a California Ground Squirrel was admitted to CWC with burns on all four of her paws and some digits. In addition to the burns, of which the origin is unknown, the patient had fleas, was thin and slightly dehydrated.

This patient is currently receiving daily medicated foot soaks to gently disinfect the wounds and remove damaged tissue. These soaks are an important part of the healing process, helping to remove injured skin while encouraging healthy new skin to grow. After each soak, her paws are carefully dried, treated with a combination of antimicrobial medications, and wrapped to protect the injuries and prevent her from chewing or picking at them. She is also receiving pain medication to keep her as comfortable as possible during recovery. Because this species is easily stressed and can be quite fractious, our staff take extra care to minimize her handling and limit human interaction, allowing her the quiet environment she needs to heal.

California Ground Squirrels are a native, ground-dwelling species with gray-brown fur. Unlike non-native Eastern Fox Squirrels, who live in trees, these squirrels inhabit complex burrows with multiple openings, often housing generations of squirrels.

Ground Squirrels eat a variety of nuts, seeds and insects. Those living in areas with colder climates spend the warmer months storing food in preparation for hibernation. They enter a state of inactivity in which their heart rate and respiratory system slows so drastically that they only need to breathe every few minutes.

During this period, they will wake about every five days to eat some of their food stores. Importantly, this species is adaptable, and those who live in warmer climates, like Southern California, tend to stay active year-round.

Recovery from these types of burns is slow. The patient's front feet have shown positive signs of healing, while the back feet are still in the debridement phase. Our team remains hopeful that, in the coming weeks, this California Ground Squirrel will continue to improve and eventually be released back into the wild.