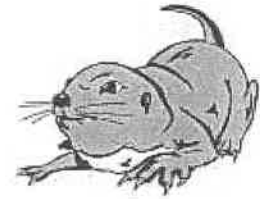


Hibernation



¹ What do you like to do when the winter comes and weather becomes really cold? Many animals choose to stay home and sleep through the entire season! We call this animal behavior "hibernation."

² Arctic ground squirrels, groundhogs, frogs, turtles, bats, and snakes all hibernate.



³ Hibernating animals must prepare to sleep away the winter months. They eat a lot and become really fat in the months before winter arrives. Once they are ready, they enter their shelters (usually underground) and take a long, non-stop nap! During hibernation, these animals are so inactive that they appear dead. They lower their body temperatures to around the freezing mark (32°F). Their heartbeats slow down. Their breathing rate decreases. They do not eat. They survive by using the fat that they have stocked up earlier.

⁴ Many people think polar bears hibernate during the cold winter months. They don't! When polar bears nap in their winter shelters, their bodies maintain a temperature around 98 °F. Most polar bears only rest for a short period of time when the food supply (such as seals) is scarce. Only pregnant female polar bears spend several months inside their dens. Hence, scientists don't consider polar bears true hibernators.

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