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FROM BIRTH TO MATURITY

As in all marsupials, a newborn wombat is extremely undeveloped and very small – about the size of a small bean. Birth occurs after a very short gestation period, probably only about 22 days; following its birth the young makes its way to the pouch, where, suckling from its mother, it grows and develops for about eight months. It leaves the pouch permanently at about 10 months of age, but it may still stay with its mother for a further 8–10 months before it is finally independent.

Birth

The birth of a wombat has not, to my knowledge, even been observed, but it undoubtedly is very similar to that of other marsupials. The mother's pouch itself is clean and moist. A dry brown scale, which from time to time exudes from the pouch along with dust and other foreign matter, forming a dark encrustation around the pouch opening, has been wiped away by the mother's tongue. At the time of birth the mother probably adopts the same position as the one she uses when cleaning the pouch opening, that is, sitting on her rump with the hind legs extended forward, so that the cloaca, which is also the opening of the birth canal, is directed slightly upward.