



## Formula - is this term misunderstood? Misused? Or both?

### Quick quiz

Test your "rehab terminology" for a quick minute. Answer "true" if for each that describes a 'formula' in rehab usage. Multiple answers are OK!

Are these examples of formulas:

True? A.) Fox Valley 20/50

True? B.) 1 part of GME® plus 2 parts of water and 1/4 part of heavy whipping cream

True? C.) Powdered Esbilac® reconstituted with 2 parts of water, allowed to rest for 8 hours (in the refrigerator, of course)

### Answer

All are true - sort of - depending on who you talk to. That is a bit of a problem when we in the rehab community are trying to discuss the substitute milks we prepare and feed to young wild mammal babies. Overuse and misuse of a term can cause misunderstanding and miscommunication, and even "lively" social media disagreements (like the bull elk pictured above!). Seriously though, the multiple meanings and use of the term "formula" is a constant challenge for us at WildAgain when talking to rehabilitators around the country about these issues.

Even the Merriam-Webster dictionary is not totally clear, and recognizes multiple uses of the term:

**2 a (1) : RECIPE**

// The product is made using a secret *formula* that the company refuses to reveal.

**(2) : PRESCRIPTION**

**b** : a milk mixture or substitute for feeding an infant

## **A better answer (in our opinion)**

To best conduct the research on substitute wild mammals' milks, we have begun to standardize the terms we use when discussing specifics and posting information on ewildagain.org. This can help minimize the miscommunication and misunderstanding - especially when discussing something as contentious as 'formula' within the wildlife rehab community.

Here's how we would answer A, B, and C posed above:

- A.) We would consider this an **INGREDIENT**, and specifically a powdered milk replacer **PRODUCT**. When asked what formula they use, some people respond "Fox Valley 20/50." Again, we would consider that to be an ingredient, just as any other powdered milk replacer product.
  
- B.) Our preference is to consider this a **RECIPE**. It is a list of original ingredients, in their respective parts or weights for both dry and wet ingredients - prior to being rehydrated and reconstituted.
  
- C.) This is what we would consider the best use of the term **FORMULA**. A final and fully reconstituted liquid milk substitute ready for feeding to a young wild animal baby. You know - the white liquid stuff.

## **Conclusion**

Clearly, anyone can use whatever term that want to in any manner they choose. That's what free speech is all about. Our intention is not to get too nit-picky about a single word. But as fellow practitioners in the wildlife rehab community, it seems that it would benefit us to try to agree on the meanings of terms. Perhaps adopting more specific and precise nomenclature would facilitate clearer communication during discussion of rehabilitation topics. It seems reasonable to try this as we all strive to have respectful and constructive discussions about 'formula' and problem-solving on this complicated and sometimes contentious topic.

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