

## Cute white coat is the first of the season

RSPCA East Winch Wildlife Centre is used to being busy with sick and injured wildlife but this festive season looks as though it could be *very* busy!

The Centres specialist facilities are always the temporary home to sick and injured seal pups but usually the two seals species come at different time of the year. Common seals have their pups in the summer and Grey seals pup in the winter, meaning the Centre usually has a short respite period between the two pupping seasons. Increasingly the two seasons are running together and sick Common seals are still filling the Isolation cubicles into November and December. This is now Grey season so finding space is becoming increasingly difficult.

Grey seals are born with a white coat that they keep for their first 3 weeks. They feed from their mothers throughout the day to pack on the weight. They then begin to moult their coat and their mothers leave them to fend for themselves. The first 'white coat' for East Winch this season arrived on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December. He has been name Ricicles (like the cereal, to complement our Common seal name theme for this year- Tea and Coffee brands!) We estimate that he is approximately one week old as there are no signs of him moulting and his umbilical cord has only recently dried up. He was picked up by a local seal rescue charity after being spotted by a member of the public. He was transferred to East Winch for treatment of an eye infection. This makes him the first 'white coat' of the season but not the first Grey seal pup. The Centre already had 8 other already moulted Grey pups that have come for other parts of the country where the pupping season starts a little earlier. Rough seas in the North East have meant that lots of pups have been separated from their mums prematurely and have run into trouble. There are fewer seal rehabilitation centres in the North East meaning seals cannot get the care they need locally so we have been working very closely with other organisations and charities to help find suitable care for these animals. So our first white coat of the year is also the first 'Norfolk' seal of the season!

Blakeney Point looks set to have a record number of Grey seal pups this year so we have a feeling that the Centre's staff will be having a 'white coat' Christmas even if it is not a white Christmas!

If you are stuck for gift ideas this Christmas why not sponsor a seal? Contact the centre on.....



Ricles on admission to the Centre on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December. He is the first 'white coat' of the year for the staff at East Winch and the first Grey seal pup from the Norfolk coast (Photo credit A Beeby).