

Far North Queensland vet clinic joins national program for wildlife health

A Cairns-based veterinary clinic which specialises in caring for wild birds and animals has joined a national program to help track the health of Australia’s wildlife.

Boongarry Veterinary Services treats animals from Tully to Cape York and across to the Northern Territory border, routinely caring for kangaroos and wallabies, quolls, lizards, birds, possums, snakes, bats, and even cassowaries and crocodiles.



Figure 1: Dr Olsson with a palm cockatoo.

Clinic veterinarian Dr Annabelle Olsson said the clinic has become the fourth in the country to sign up to contribute data to Wildlife Health Australia through its national sentinel veterinary clinic surveillance program.

Wildlife Health Australia CEO Dr Rupert Woods explained the data is used to better understand disease threats to biodiversity, human health and livestock.

“It adds to the big picture of wildlife health that we are building up. Universities, government veterinarians and clinics associated with zoos around Australia are also submitting data to our electronic Wildlife Health Information System,” Dr Woods said.

“We can keep an eye on threats to biodiversity like beak and feather disease, diseases with human health implications such as Australian bat lyssavirus, and potential threats to farmed animals such as avian influenza. We are also on the lookout for newly emerging diseases, or diseases found overseas that could one day come into Australia, such as white-nose syndrome fungus that is decimating bats in North America. Knowledge of the health of our wildlife and what diseases are out there improves our understanding and decision-making and ultimately benefits all Australians,” he said.

Dr Olsson in 1993 co-founded the first wildlife rescue and rehabilitation service in the region at the same time as she started Boongarry Veterinary Services, and she is also president of the Wildlife Conservancy of Tropical Queensland. She described herself as passionate about understanding and conserving the unique wildlife of far north Queensland.

“At Boongarry we want to help fill the gaps in knowledge about our local native animals, and also contribute to the national picture of wildlife health,” she said.

Along with treating wildlife, Boongarry Veterinary Services also treats pet birds, reptiles and exotic and zoo animals.

The other three veterinary clinics participating in Wildlife Health Australia’s sentinel clinic program are the Adelaide Koala and Wildlife Hospital, Lort Smith Animal Hospital in Melbourne, and the RSPCA Queensland Wildlife Hospital in Brisbane. Wildlife health surveillance occurs in all jurisdictions in Australia, including the Australian Antarctic Territory. The sentinel clinic program is one of a number of national wildlife surveillance activities that are coordinated by Wildlife Health Australia and help support Australia’s bigger biosecurity system.

More information:

www.wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au

www.boongarryvet.com.au

About:

Wildlife Health Australia is the peak body for wildlife health in Australia. Wildlife Health Australia was established as the Australian Wildlife Health Network in 2002 as a national government initiative, and its work continues following incorporation as an independent company in 2013. Major funding for Wildlife Health Australia is provided by the Australian Department of Agriculture and Water Resources.

Media contacts:

Dr Olsson, Boongarry Veterinary Services 07 4032 2244

Dr Rupert Woods, Wildlife Health Australia 0438 755 078

Image caption: Dr Olsson with a palm cockatoo.

A larger resolution image available on request – emma.homes@optusnet.com.au