



MEDIA STATEMENT

Friday, 10 January 2020

Bushfire emergencies now impacting one billion Australian native animals

As Australia's south-east experiences another day of very high dangerous fire conditions, experts have estimated that already over the past five months, more than 800 million native animals have been killed in the ongoing bushfire emergencies. The collective impact will have affected one billion animals over that period.

The estimates were made by Sydney University's Professor Chris Dickman, based on earlier studies of the density of mammals, birds and reptiles in NSW.

Professor Dickman said: "I think there's nothing quite to compare with the devastation that's going on over such a large area so quickly. It's a monstrous event in terms of geography and the number of individual animals affected."¹

Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced on January 5th the establishment of a National Bushfire Response Agency with a fund of \$2 billion to guide and lead the response to the devastation caused by the unprecedented bushfire emergencies.

A component of that fund would be committed to the recovery of wildlife.

Wildlife Health Australia's CEO Dr Rupert Wood said; "This will be a recovery effort which will need to harness expertise across state and federal governments, wildlife advocacy and care agencies, NGOs and universities, and will require sustained, targeted efforts across months and years to come."

Even for animals that escaped the fires, with the massive loss of forests and habitats, many will starve or be killed trying to move to unknown habitats in the months ahead.

Wildlife Health Australia recommends how people can help:

- Take the advice of your local authorities and don't enter a fireground to look for injured wildlife until it is safe to do so. Your safety remains the number one priority.
- If you find injured wildlife, contact an accredited wildlife rescue organisation for assistance. The Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife has compiled a list: <https://www.backyardbuddies.org.au/help-byb/injured-wildlife> (For animals affected by bushfires on Kangaroo Island, call SAVEM on 0477 055 233 or email info@savem.org.au).
- For wildlife needing urgent medical assistance, and where an accredited wildlife carer is not available, these animals should be taken to your nearest vet, but only if it is safe for you to do so. If possible, call ahead to ensure that the vet is taking in wildlife and ask advice about animal restraint and transport.
- It is best not to interfere with animals that are not injured.
- It is also important that pet cats and dogs are kept inside to protect wildlife. Heat-stressed wildlife are often weak and vulnerable, making them easy targets.
- If driving in smoke affected areas, please slow down to avoid hitting wildlife on the roads.
- To help wildlife around your home, you can leave out shallow bowls of water that wildlife can access.

Wildlife Health Australia
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¹ Quoted from an interview with National Public Radio in America.