

Sick, Injured or Dead Wildlife: How to Help and Report

What to do if...

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You want to help sick, orphaned or injured wildlife?

- **Do not approach** sick, orphaned or injured wildlife. Observe from a distance and consider the advice below **before taking any action**.
- If the animal is capable of avoiding threats (e.g. traffic or domestic animals), it may be in its best interests to be left alone.
- But, if you have concerns about an animal's welfare, **contact a licensed wildlife rehabilitation group as soon as possible**.
 - See [wildlife rescue and rehabilitation links](#) below for contact information for licensed groups.
- If a licensed wildlife rehabilitation group is not available, wildlife needing **urgent medical assistance** may be taken to the nearest veterinarian, but **only if safe** for you and the animal.
 - See Safety advice below and, wherever possible, call ahead to ensure that the veterinarian accepts wildlife and obtain advice about safe animal restraint and transport.
- **Be aware:**
 - Sick and injured wildlife may **bite, peck, jump, scratch or kick**.
 - There is a **potential risk of disease transmission** between wildlife and humans or domestic animals.
 - It is **prohibited for members of the public to care for wildlife** unless authorised or licensed to do so.

Safety advice - Protecting yourself and the animal

- Improper rescue can **hurt or distress a wild animal** and may put your **health and safety at risk**. Do not **handle wildlife unnecessarily**, or if you do not have the **skills and equipment** to do so safely. You may need to ask someone to observe the animal while you gather protective equipment.
- **To ensure safety**, some wild animals **require specialised handling** and must only be rescued **by trained and licensed wildlife rescuers**.
 - Members of the public **should NOT approach or attempt to capture**: snakes, monitor lizards (goannas), bats* (including flying-foxes and microbats), large macropods (kangaroos or wallabies), large wombats, raptors (e.g. eagles, falcons or hawks), other large birds (e.g. pelicans, swans) or marine animals (whales, dolphins, seals or large sea turtles).
- If you must handle wildlife, protect yourself and the animal by following these recommendations:

- ALWAYS protect hands against scratches, bites and disease. Full protection is provided by wearing rubber or disposable gloves covered by leather or manual handling gloves. If both options are not available, wear what is available.
- Wear a jacket or long sleeves.
- Wear a dust mask (ideally P2/N95 specification or higher), if available.
- Make sure the animal is well restrained to avoid being scratched, bitten or kicked. A towel can act as a protective barrier, but take care to ensure it covers the animal in a way that will prevent them from scratching and biting.
- After handling animals and removing gloves ALWAYS wash hands and arms with abundant soap and warm water, then dry thoroughly. Hand sanitiser (60% to 90% ethanol concentration) can be applied to reinforce disinfection but should not replace proper handwashing.
- If you are bitten or scratched, clean the injury with warm water and soap (or disinfectant), and seek medical advice.
- *Australian bat lyssavirus can be transmitted from bats to humans. In the event of a **bat** bite, scratch or other significant contact, **IMMEDIATELY** wash wounds thoroughly with soap and copious water for 15 minutes, apply a virucidal antiseptic such as an iodine-based antiseptic and allow antiseptic to dry. Bat saliva in the eyes or mouth should be rinsed out immediately and thoroughly with water. In the event of any exposure, regardless of any previous vaccination, seek medical attention **URGENTLY**. For more information contact your local Public Health agency.*
- For further information, see the [National Wildlife Biosecurity Guidelines](#).

State and Territory government wildlife rescue and rehabilitation links

- ACT - <https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/city-services/pets-and-wildlife#Wildlife>
- NSW - <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/native-animals/sick-or-injured-animals>
- NT - <https://nt.gov.au/environment/animals/report-injured-wildlife-or-rescue>
- Qld - <https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/plants-animals/wildlife/injured-and-orphaned-wildlife/injured>
- SA - <https://pir.sa.gov.au/animal-management/animal-health/help-sick-injured-wildlife>
- Tas - <https://nre.tas.gov.au/wildlife-management/injured-and-orphaned-wildlife>
- Vic - <https://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/sick-injured-or-orphaned-wildlife/sick-injured-or-orphaned-wildlife>
- WA - <https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/wildlife-and-ecosystems/living-with-native-wildlife/helping-sick-or-injured-native-wildlife>

You want to report unusual signs of sickness or deaths in wildlife?

- **Reporting observations of sickness or deaths in wild animals helps us to understand threats to Australian wildlife.**
- It is also **required by law to report** if you suspect any animal may be showing signs of a [nationally notifiable disease](#).
- If you see sickness or death in wild animals, you can report it to:
 - your [State/Territory WHA Coordinator](#)
 - the 24 hour [Emergency Animal Disease Hotline](#)* on 1800 675 888
 - a veterinarian
 - the Department of Primary Industries or Agriculture in the state/territory in which the event is occurring/occurred or,
 - by completing WHA's [Wildlife Disease Incident Report Form](#) online. This information will then be passed on to the relevant WHA Coordinator.
 - If you are reporting a mass mortality event of unknown cause in flying-foxes you can also report using the [Flying-fox mass mortality & morbidity event report form](#).
- Further information about specific wildlife health issues is available in the [WHA Fact Sheets](#) and on the [WHA Incident Information](#) webpage.

*The **Emergency Animal Disease Hotline** is a toll-free phone number that connects callers to the relevant state/territory officer to report concerns about any potential emergency disease situation.

You find dead wildlife?

- Report deaths in wildlife as [advised above](#).
- Following your report, you may be requested to submit a carcass(es) for investigation.
 - Please follow the advice of your jurisdiction regarding submission of wild animal carcass(es).
- **Be aware**, dead wildlife **may pose a potential disease transmission risk** to humans or domestic animals.
- Australian marsupials such as possums, koalas or macropods (kangaroos, wallabies) carry their young (joey) in a pouch. If you find a recently dead marsupial check if it has a joey in it's pouch ensuring to follow the safety advice above and contact a wildlife rehabilitation group if you find a live joey.
- If you wish to dispose of a carcass(es), follow the [Safety advice](#) to protect yourself.
- As a minimum, it is recommended to:
 - **Wear gloves and avoid handling the carcass directly** – use an inverted plastic bag or a tool to pick up the carcass.
 - After handling, remove gloves and **wash hands with soap and warm water then dry thoroughly**. Alcohol-based hand sanitiser (gel with 60% to 90% ethanol concentration) can be applied until hand washing facilities are available or to reinforce disinfection but should not replace proper hand washing.
- To dispose of a dead animal:
 - Follow the hygiene procedures outlined above and in the [Safety advice](#) above.
 - Place the body inside a strong, leak-proof plastic bag and seal. Place the bag inside a second plastic bag and seal.
 - Refer to your local council or State/Territory government agency for further instructions on safe disposal.