

# What do I do if I find wildlife? – FACT SHEET



## Long Grass Nature Refuge

605 Spinach Creek Rd, Fordsdale via Gatton Qld 4343

If you need assistance with native wildlife call (07) 4697 5122

This fact sheet contains information sourced from members of Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers, members of other groups, independent advice, and research



### You've found a sick, orphaned, or injured native animal, what should you do?



Finding a sick, orphaned, or injured native animal is of course very stressful for you as well as for the animal. But there are a few simple things that you can do to immediately minimise stress and increase the animals chance of recovery.

### Warm, dark, and quiet

Improper rescue can hurt both the animal and you! Which is why we train all our volunteers in correct, confident, and calm rescue techniques. Native animals are not used to being handled, and are very susceptible to stress. If handled improperly, they will struggle and may even hurt themselves even more. It is therefore important to take the utmost care in the rescue of native wildlife, and to reduce this stress as much as possible.

Here is a quick '1 2 3 guide' followed by some specific guidelines for different groups of Australian native animals.

1. Evaluate, and remove any immediate threat to the animal. This could mean locking cats & dogs away to alleviate stress until a trained rescuer arrives. It could mean asking someone to stop or divert traffic if the animal is on the road.
2. Minimise stress by placing the animal in a soft towel or cloth, and then gently place the animal in a box. Put the box in a warm dark quiet room, away from pets, TV, radios etc, and please DO NOT DISTURB. The stress associated with human contact can result in death.
3. Seek advice...  
Four? I thought this was '1 2 3'... Maybe so, but there really is a fourth point here, which is simply make a tea or coffee, and pat yourself on the back. Why? Well, if you've just done the above three, you have given that animal the best chance it has towards a speedy recovery, and to take it's place back out in the wild again as soon as possible.

### Below are some basic immediate guidelines for different animals:

#### Baby Birds

Very often when we find a helpless baby bird on the ground, our first reaction is to assume that it is abandoned, and rescue it. Sometimes, this is the best thing to do, but so many babies are simply taking 'first steps' and fall to the ground. This is quite natural, and given time, the parents manage very well to get baby back up into the tree.

So, our first job is to ascertain if baby is indeed abandoned. If not, then the best 'mother' for a baby bird is of course, the mother bird.

Firstly, if you can locate the nest site, and the parents are still around ~ assuming that the weather is not too hot, cold, or wet ~ the baby has no obvious illness or injury ~ and the chance of predation is minimal ~ try to reunite with the parents. The easiest way to do this, is to construct an artificial nest (to suit the size of the chick) out of an old margarine or ice-cream container. Put some holes in the bottom, to let water drain out, line it with dry leaf litter, and hang it as high as possible in the tree, well away from the trunk and thick branches, which would give easy access to predators.

Now the waiting part: Once you are well away from the nest, if the parents are around, they will soon start to feed the chick. You will need to watch closely for some time to see what happens. If the adults do not return to feed them, or if there is a high risk of predation, then the baby/s will need to be brought into care. If in doubt, please do not hesitate to phone us for advice.

Note: If the youngster is fledging, i.e. well feathered and perching, try to place it as high as possible back into the tree, and as with baby birds, please keep a close eye on them.

If you find an abandoned baby bird that cannot be reunited, as above ~ then please do the following: Place the bird in a temporary nest, which can be anything to suit the size of the bird ~ such as an plastic margarine or take away food container ~ well lined with soft cloth or tissues to resemble the nest lining. Place the nest in a cardboard box and as before, put the box in a warm, dark, quiet area.

Please do not offer anything to eat or drink native birds have specialised diets.

## **Birds**

If the bird can be easily caught ~ (by placing a thick towel over the bird and scooping it up) ~ place it in a paper lined cardboard box with plenty of air holes. Put the box in a warm, dark, quiet area. This is quite simply the best way to help the animal, and these simple steps can very often save its life. Birds are particularly susceptible to stress, and stress can very quickly cause death.

Please do not offer anything to eat or drink ~ unless advised and make sure the box is large enough for the bird to fit comfortably into.

## **Mammals (Adults )**

If the animal (possums) can be carefully caught with a thick towel or blanket, place in a sturdy cardboard box with the towel. Make sure the towel is wrapped around the animal but not too tightly. Wear gloves as adult possums have sharp teeth and claws. Leave the box in a quiet dark spot ensuring that the animal will not get too cold or too hot.

Kangaroos and wallabies often have broken bones and cannot be moved or handled. If the animal is dead please check for young. Please do not try to remove joeys from the pouch as their mouths may be damaged by the forcible removal from the mothers teat. The joey can only be removed from the pouch with the mothers teat intact. A long teat indicates 'joey' is possibly still in the vicinity, please have a look around.

Please do not offer anything to eat or drink, marsupials require specialised milks.

## **Mammals (Baby)**

Please do not try to remove joeys from the pouch as their mouths may be damaged by the forcible removal from the mothers teat. The joey can only be removed from the pouch with the mothers teat intact. A long teat indicates 'joey' is possibly still in the vicinity, please have a look around. Place baby in a pillow slip, or similar natural fabric, put that inside a woollen jumper or beanie.

Baby marsupials cannot regulate their body temperature, please keep them under your shirt until passed to an experienced carer. Do not try to heat them any other way as often when found they may be cold and temperature needs to be slowly raised or the animal may die.

Please do not offer anything to eat or drink, marsupials require specialised milks.

## **Echidnas**

Use thick gloves, a towel or blanket (a pair of thongs worn like gloves is great too), and place the animal into a very sturdy container such as a large plastic bucket. These animals can easily push their way out of a carton and wedge themselves under a car seat. **DO NOT GIVE HEAT**, or place on a hot water bottle. Echidnas do not cope at all well with heat, keep them **COOL, DARK & QUIET and no warmer than 25 degrees**.

Please do not offer anything to eat or drink, Echidnas have specialised diets. Please remember where you picked up the injured echidna, it is important that we know this for release. Unless an animal is injured please do not relocate echidnas, a little 'puggle' may be in a burrow nearby.

## **Lizards**

Whilst most lizards are quite docile, please use caution, as even a medium size lizard, if stressed, can inflict deep wounds with its claws. Lizards also possess a very powerful bite, and because of their diet, most bites are likely to infect. We suggest you approach the animal quietly, place a cardboard box with plenty of air-holes over the lizard, and weigh the box down with something heavy ensuring that the weight is not too heavy to collapse the box.

Please do not offer anything to eat or drink, lizards have specialised diets.

## **Snakes**

Please **DO NOT TOUCH**. Stay away. Keep pets and people away. If at all possible, please try to keep an eye on where the snake goes to make our job easier (searching) when we arrive at your home.

Please do not offer anything to eat or drink, snakes have specialised diets.

## **Orphaned Wildlife**

Always check the pouches, and around the bodies of dead mothers on the road. Most people are very surprised to learn that despite the extensive injuries to female Marsupials killed on our roads, the little 'joeys' cocooned safely inside Mum's pouch very often survive the impact unharmed. In fact they are so well insulated that joeys can survive for up to an incredible 10 days in a dead mother's pouch and can then go on to suffer a long slow lingering death of starvation and dehydration. **SO PLEASE CHECK**.

Also, young Marsupials, if old enough to leave the pouch, frequently hang around Mum for many days, often watching from just a few metres away in the undergrowth. So, if you've taken the time to stop and check a mother, please take just a couple of minutes to check the immediate surrounding area for the joey.

Remember, your safety, and the safety of other motorists is paramount. Make sure that when you stop to check, that your car is parked safely well off the road. No good saving an animal hit by a car if (A) You get hit by another car, or (B) Cause an accident yourself.

**PLEASE DO NOT CUDDLE THE ANIMAL**, they are not used to human contact.

**PLEASE DO NOT TRY TO CARE FOR THE ANIMAL YOURSELF**.

All Australian native animals in care require a highly specialised and intensive feeding program such as specialised diet, amounts & frequency. A lot need urgent veterinary attention (not immediately obvious) and many require very specialised housing requirements such as exact heating, perching, bedding, and sometimes humidity. ALL require a complex rehabilitation program. It is illegal to keep a native animal without a rescue permit.

### One final note

Yes! They are cute, helpless, and 'different', and there are of course a few exceptions, but in general ~ Australian native animals, due to strange territorial behaviour, specialised diet, housing, social interaction, and often 'unsocial hours', basically make lousy pets.

SO LET'S KEEP OUR WILDLIFE WHERE IT BELONGS

**FREE...**



Meet Lilly the Red Necked Wallaby. Lilly lives in a humidity crib at the moment to regulate her temperature and is given a specialised diet. Lilly came into care immediately after her mother died in a road accident as a result of this prompt action by a member of the public. Lilly has an excellent chance of a full recovery and eventual release into a 'mob' of her own kind. Prompt action like this saves lives