

Community information on supporting wildlife impacted by heat exhaustion and dehydration – Summer 2018/19



Over summer, wildlife may suffer from heat stress due to extreme weather. Victorians can help animals suffering from heat-stress by offering shade and water.

How do I recognise a heat-stressed animal?

During hot spells, you may see tree-dwelling or nocturnal animals such as possums, koalas or wombats, wandering around on the ground in search of water during the day.

Birds may pant with their mouths open and hold their wings out away from their body in an attempt to cool down.

Grey-headed flying-foxes are particularly prone to heat stress. They typically flap their wings and move down lower in the trees to escape heat from direct sunlight.

How can I help heat-stressed animals?

You can help native wildlife cope with extreme heat by placing bowls of water out around your garden to help keep them hydrated. Use the garden hose to spray mist into trees and shrubs to create cooler niches that they can use to escape the heat.

For small wildlife such as possums or birds that appear lethargic, non-responsive or sick, using protecting gloves, pick the animal up using a towel or cloth and place it in a well-ventilated, cool container on a damp towel. Provide a small bowl of water for it to drink.

You can also gently spray the animal with room temperature water to cool it down. Avoid placing any further stress on the animal by staying quiet and keeping children and pets away.

Which animals should I avoid?

If it is a larger animal such as a kangaroo, koala or wombat, it is not recommended that you touch or handle it for your own safety.

Under no circumstances should you touch or handle a flying-fox as they can carry diseases that can be transmitted to humans.

Further information

For further information or to seek advice or assistance for wildlife suffering from heat stress, contact your local vet, a licensed wildlife shelter or rehabilitation organisation. For contact details for wildlife rehabilitation organisations, visit the [DELWP website](#).