

# Wildlife and Heat Stress

Community information on supporting wildlife impacted by heat exhaustion and dehydration – Summer 2023/2024



## Over summer wildlife may suffer from heat stress during extreme weather events.

### How do I recognise a heat-stressed animal?

On hot days you may see tree-dwelling or nocturnal animals such as possums or koalas wandering around on the ground in search of a cooler spot or water.

Birds may pant with their mouths open and hold their wings out 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.

### Is it an emergency event??

Under Victoria's emergency response arrangements, wildlife extreme heat preparedness and response activities are limited to nominated large flying-fox colonies. While other wildlife may be impacted by an extreme heat event, this will not result in an emergency response.

### How can I help heat-stressed animals?

You can assist wildlife suffering from heat exhaustion and dehydration by placing bowls of water around your garden to help keep them hydrated. Ensure you place a stick or stone into the bowl so that any animals that 'fall in' can also climb out.

If you see wildlife resting you should keep people and pets away and allow it to rest and recover. Noise should also be kept to a minimum.


### Can I pick up the animal?

In most circumstances, wildlife should be left alone and allowed to self-regulate their temperature. Attempting to capture or handle wildlife may put them under additional stress and you could injure them. They may also bite or scratch you.

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

### What if the animal is injured?

To seek advice or assistance for injured wildlife contact your local vet, a licensed wildlife shelter or rehabilitation organisation.



For contact details for wildlife rehabilitation organisations, visit the DEECA website at [www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/sick-injured-or-orphaned-wildlife/sick-injured-or-orphaned-wildlife](http://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au/sick-injured-or-orphaned-wildlife/sick-injured-or-orphaned-wildlife).

## Further information

For further information on wildlife and extreme heat, including emergency response arrangements can be found at [www.wildlife.vic.gov.au](http://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au).