



Wildlife Rescue Basic Training

Bushland Conservation Management

Wildlife Rescue training and First Aid for Native Wildlife by Kim Morris 2020



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Wildlife Rescue Basic Training

A wildlife rescue basket is equipped with most things you will need for a successful rescue.



A plastic basket such as the one pictured is excellent for transporting most rescues.

Towels

Pillowcases

Pouches

Heat pack

Sharp Strong Scissors

Safety Pin

Tweezers

Disposable Gloves

Thick heavy duty gloves

Syringes of different sizes

Bandages

Perch for birds

Pliers and wire cutters

Torch

Disinfectant wipes



** Try to line the basket with a clean towel to prevent birds or echidna getting any feet or beak stuck in the holes – ideally an echidna would go in a bunted container.*

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* If a basket is not suitable or available you can carry a pillowcase around in your car.

Safety Checklist before you commence a rescue

Your personal health and safety is a priority and we advise a licenced trained wildlife rescuer is called in to assist with species such as:

- Bats – if bitten, the risk of lyssavirus.
- Snakes- need to be handled by authorised and trained rescuers.
- Kangaroo and Wallabies
- Koalas.
- Some sea birds

Just like when performing First Aid for people you need to check the site is safe for you to perform a rescue.

If on a road side make sure you have plenty of space to park. Wear a high visibility vest and put out the work vehicle traffic cones.

Ensure the animal will not run out into traffic to get away from you as you approach – this could cause a serious accident not only for the animal but for the people driving past.

Difficult rescues must be called into a local rescue group.

If on a highway or extremely busy road you will need to call a wildlife rescue organisation.

Assess whether the animal is within your capabilities to rescue, such as its position high in a tree or being overly aggressive. If it is a Bat, Snake, Koala, Kangaroo or wallaby or a bird that can take flight an experienced wildlife rescuer will need to be called.

Ensure that whatever caused the injury to the animal is no longer around to injure you, such as snake or dog bite.

Dogs and domestic pets need to be tied up away from the animal

Use a towel or thick gloves to help protect you from bites and scratches.

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Wildlife Stress

Stress is a big killer of wildlife and it is very important that all measures are met to limit the stress to an animal.

We are seen as a predator no matter how much love we are trying to bestow! Some animals have never been touched or in close contact to a human so just being injured, handled and rescued is a huge stress.

When rescuing wildlife it is important to work quickly and try to avoid creating a 'chase' scenario. In the case of the animal being able to still run or fly away it can often be best to call in the expert rescue teams which have the specific tools to use such as a tranquiliser darts or extension net poles.

- Never administer any food or water to an injured animal this can kill them if in shock.
- Never **forcibly** feed or water any animal
(If you are in pain do you feel like eating?)
- Once the animal is contained it is essential that they are kept in a QUIET, WARM & DARK place until they can be taken straight to a vet ASAP.
- Ensure there are no children and pets that can go near the animal. Even the smell of cats and dogs can be stressful to wildlife.
- Always wrap some heat up in a towel and leave near the animals such a hot water bottle, heat packs or even a drink bottle with warm water in it.
- All rescued animals need to have a vet check and treatment as soon as possible, they will then be passed onto a registered wildlife carer for rehabilitation.

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Wildlife Rescue Training – Doing the rescue:

- Do a quick assessment of the animal and try to notice any visible signs of injury and try to determine what has caused the injury.
- Remember to write down your location as you will need these details to pass onto the vet for a release
- Activate your heat pad – heat is needed to treat shock which all wildlife suffer to some degree on rescue. Wrap the heat pad in a towel and place in basket.
- Try to work swiftly and quickly as stress is a big killer in wildlife.
- Keep your rescue basket close to you and open ready to place the animal inside quickly.

Often animals that require rescue are able to be picked up by placing a towel over the animal, especially cover their head to ensure their eyes are covered.

- Try to scoop the animal up quickly and supportively as to not put too much pressure on an injured body part and place straight into rescue cage.
- Always check the pouch of all marsupials such as bandicoots, echidna, possums, gliders, macropods and koalas.
- If the mother is still alive take both mother and joey (remain in pouch) to the vet together.

If the mother is deceased and you can't take the deceased mother to the vet it is time to remove the joey/s.

Never pull a joey off a teat it can cause severe brain damage and damage to the mouth.

Depending on the species often there is more than one joey, sometimes four! Have your rescue kit ready you will need to very carefully place a safety pin through the base of the teat that the joey is attached to. *Remember this is only if the mother is DEAD!!!* You may need to cut the pouch with your scissors for better access a good reason to keep good quality scissors in your rescue kit. Once the safety pin is through you can then cut the teat off and carefully pin it to the pouch, while gently cradling the joey. The joey will release the teat on its own accord when ready. The safety pin is to prevent the joey swallowing the teat.

Never pull a joey off a teat it can cause severe brain damage and damage to the mouth.

Sometimes this can occur on impact and not be the rescuers fault.

- Joeys must be placed in a nice tight warm pouch together and ensure they are kept warm.
- For adult possums and bandicoots grab them across their back shoulders behind the neck and the base of their tail. You can still scoop them up in your towel and support their body weight. You can place them in a pillow case or a pouch also.
- For Birds throw a towel over them and if they are able to stand, set up a perch in rescue basket as this is more comfortable for them you may be able to roll up a towel for them to lean onto.
- If you find a baby bird that is not feathered and the parents have not returned for some time it is time to get this baby bird on warmth and transport to a wildlife carer.
- If the baby bird is feathered (fledgling) it is possibly learning to fly. Put the baby bird on a branch out of harm's way the parents will return shortly.
- You can make an artificial nest by using a bucket with holes in the bottom put some leaves and a long stick in the bucket and hang in a tree; the parents will hear their baby and feed it.

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- For Lizards throw a towel over them and try to gently wrap them up. Then lift them from under the tummy supporting the front and rear end.
- Gliders can be fierce! Or at least sound fierce ☺ Throw a towel over them and quickly scoop them up and place in a pouch on warmth in the rescue basket.
*If caught on a barb wire fence, if possible cover the animals with a towel to help reduce stress and protect from the heat of the sun. *An experienced rescuer is best for this situation.* Let them settle for a moment. Try to support the animal as to stop any further damage being done to the patagium. As you cut the wire hold it to prevent the wire recoiling back and to take some of the pressure off the animals entanglement site. Use caution as many farmers won't like their fence being cut...
A vet is the best person to remove the barbs from the patagium (the gliding membrane) if not too torn it can be repaired. Take glider with barb wire still attached to the vet ASAP.
- Echidnas will try to bury themselves so you may need to dig down to get to their underbelly to be able to lift them up. Watch out for their sharp claws. They will dig themselves out of a box they are best rescued in a bin but if this is not available a basket will work but try to line the sides to avoid beaks getting stuck in the cracks. If a female and she has a pouch, look around and check the area for a puggle as they may have been thrown on impact, they are a bluey/ grey colour when young.
- Turtles are often hit by cars as they are crossing roads. Often shell cracks can be resealed by a vet and rehabilitated. If you find a turtle crossing the road always carry them the direction they are headed otherwise they will just try to cross back over the road again. I like to hold them at the base of the tail between the back legs with both hands to avoid a bite from the long neck freshwater turtles.
- When placing the injured animal into the container try to consider whether a rolled up towel under the animal in a certain position may help it be more comfortable, such as under a dropped wing for support.
- Strap the rescue basket in with a seat belt or somebody holding it for transport to the vet. Keep the radio off or very low and drive gently around corners.
- **Never administer food and water to any animal. This can kill a stressed animal.**
- **Every animal must go to a vet who will then pass the animal onto a registered wildlife carer for rehabilitation**
- It is illegal to handle and transport certain animals such as Koalas unless you are licenced or the animal is in need of emergency care.

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A list of wildlife rescue organisations and telephone numbers for Sunshine Coast area.

Take the animal to any willing local vet for emergency care.

***Eumundi Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre/RSPCA Eumundi Noosa Rd (07) 5442 8057**

Open until 11pm at night and has a local rescue group on messenger chat also.

***Wildcare Australia Inc. ~ 07 5527 2444**

*** Wildlife Noosa ~ 0419 046 999**

***Australia Zoo Rescue Unit / 24 hour emergency hotline - 1300 369 652**

***24 Hours Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital ~ 07 5436 2000 Steve Irwin Way, Beerwah**

***Sunshine Coast Koala Rescue ~ 0423 618 740**

***Wilvos ~ 07 5441 6200**

***Bat Rescue Inc. ~ 07 5441 6200**

***Twinnies Pelican and Seabird Rescue ~ 0421 476 561**

Greencross vet Noosa Civic ~ (07) 3084 6006

24 hours After hours AEC NOOSA 'Animal Emergency Clinic Noosa Civic Tel: 07 5353 7005

Noosa District Animal Hospital

Rene St Noosaville ~ 07 5473 0004

Sunshine Coast Vets

12 Memorial Ave

Pomona ~ 07 5485 0088

24 Hours Chancellor Park Vet Surgery ~ 07 5445 5288

Sunshine Coast Pet ER ~ 07 5445 1333

431 Tanawha Tourist Drive

Tanawha

Yandina Veterinary Surgery ~ 07 5446 7303

11 Railway St

Yandina

Brisbane Bird Vet ~07 3359 2233

248 Hamilton Road

Chermside

Greencross Vets ~ 07 5491 5368

Cnr Bowman Road & West Terrace

Caloundra

Wildlife Rescue Basic Training

This training document is a **basic wildlife rescue education unit** we have developed to ensure our staff are all trained to deal with wildlife emergencies during work hours and also leisure time. Wildlife emergencies pop up and sometimes not at a convenient time. We believe it is our responsibility and duty of care to give these animals the best fighting chance we can. Where possible it may be in the best interest of the animal and your own safety to contact an experienced rescue team.

There are some fantastic and professional wildlife rescue and care groups on the Sunshine Coast. Joel and I have been active members of Wildcare Australia since 2003, and regularly attend workshops for various species. Wildcare work closely with vets and Nurses from the Australia Zoo and Currumbin Wildlife Hospital and deliver some amazing workshops that really educate, inspire and motivate you.

I highly recommend you look up their web site and consider joining if you are interested in furthering your wildlife education.



Figure 1 Mama Poss with joey tail

References – Wildcare Australia