

Helping wildlife in emergencies

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment works with the community and wildlife rehabilitation groups to rescue and care for injured and distressed native wildlife in an emergency, such as prolonged drought, or after fire or flood.

How you can help

Only licensed wildlife rescue and rehabilitation providers or qualified vets may take injured or orphaned native animals into care. You can use the [IFAW \(International Fund for Animal Welfare\) Wildlife Rescue App](#) to quickly find the closest wildlife carer to contact. If you find an injured animal, and it is safe to do so, contain it in a covered box in a dark, quiet place while waiting for a rescuer or when taking an animal to a wildlife carer or vet.

During an emergency some native animals may need short term help. Although not injured they may need access to water, food or shelter until their natural environment recovers. Only provide water or food for native wildlife if you have the permission of the land owner or land manager.

Providing water

Many animals can only survive a matter of days without water. You can help a range of native animals by giving them a safe supply of clean water, changed daily to prevent the spread of disease. Never add electrolytes or sugar to the water as it can be harmful. Use:

- Containers or water dispensers put in the shade at a range of heights, including in trees.
- Strong containers to avoid collapse with stable rocks or sticks poking out to give safe access out of the water for birds and reptiles. Modify watering troughs by adding a stick or mesh.
- Firm surfaces to put the containers on, so they don't tip if a heavy animal tries to use it.
- A cleared area with shade to allow nervous wildlife to watch out for predators and keep cool.

Swimming pools can present a danger to thirsty wildlife if no other water source is available. Keep your pool covered or secure a flotation device to side of pool such as a rope threaded through a pool noodle or to allow wildlife to escape if they fall in while drinking. Check it daily.

Providing food

Feeding native animals is generally not recommended because they have very special and diverse dietary needs. Although it's always best for the health of wildlife to forage for food and water naturally, in times of natural disaster when natural food resources are scarce, you may want to help by providing food. Only supplementary feed until nature begins to recover. If there is still vegetation, providing water only is the best way you can help. Remember:

- What can be offered to one animal in small amounts may be harmful to another and could result in debilitating disease or even death. Also, over feeding can be fatal to starving animals.
- Remove uneaten food. Wash your hands before and after cleaning and drying all food and water containers to reduce the risk to you and the wildlife you want to help. Change them daily to prevent the spread of disease and attracting unwanted pests. Always offer fresh water.
- Secure food containers in trees. Never throw food, including bird seed, directly onto the ground.
- Never feed wildlife bread, honey, sugar, avocado, chocolate or dairy products as they are very harmful. Mixtures of peanut butter, honey and rolled oats, also known as bait or wildlife balls, are also harmful to some animals.

Suitable food to offer wildlife short term in an emergency

Animals	Use in small amounts	Don't use – harmful	Tips
Kangaroos, wallabies, pademelons and wombats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Macropod pellets (rural supply stores) – if not available use high fibre horse or alpaca pellets (not high performance) Leafy green vegetables Grass or oaten hay (in farmland only) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid pony, high performance or stud mixes with rice, sugar or pollard (too rich) Grass or oaten hay (weed risk in bushland areas) Brassicas, such as cabbage, broccoli, kale, cauliflower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not hand feed Scatter food early morning and evening in small amounts – replace only as needed Provide fresh water Carrot and sweet potato may be harmful to some macropods
Eastern pygmy possums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Native plants and flowers Small amounts of sweet potato, carrot, pumpkin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sugary foods Rolled oats, peanut butter or honey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These omnivores need a varied diet. Place in fork of tree after sunset Do not encourage them to the ground, vulnerable to predation
Sugar, squirrel, feathertail and yellow-bellied gliders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some pear, red apples, melons (seeds removed) Insect meal (pet food store) 		
Brushtail and ringtail possums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Native plants and flowers Small amounts of sweet potato, carrot, pumpkin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fruit, too much starchy vegetable Rolled oats, peanut butter and honey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place in fork of tree after sunset Mainly folivores (leaf eating)
Greater gliders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eucalyptus foliage placed in a browse pot secured in a tree and replenished regularly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any foods other than eucalyptus leaves are not accepted by these animals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place at least two metres off the ground to prevent predation. If found in areas without eucalypts, report to the local wildlife rescue group
Carnivorous and insectivorous marsupials such as: antechinus, bandicoots, native rats and other rodents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insect meal (pet food shops) Finely chopped starchy vegetable Mealworms (small amount) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid raw or cooked meat or bones Rolled oats, peanut butter and honey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scatter beneath the leaf litter or place under logs where nothing larger than a bandicoot can reach Provide water
Seed and grain eating birds: parrots, cockatoos, galahs, finches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good quality wild bird blocks with large and small seeds hung in trees Fruit with seeds removed including apples, pears, melons hung in trees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Black or grey sunflower seeds can make birds sick Seed mixes other than wild bird mix or blocks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not scatter seed on the ground, it attracts predators and makes other species sick Dispose of decomposing food before replacing
Honeyeaters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insect meal or nectar mix placed in fork of tree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not offer water and sugar or honey mixes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not leave food on the ground as the birds may be attacked by predators
Lorikeets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nectar mix on a platform attached to a tree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not offer bread, water and sugar or honey mixes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not feed on the ground
Reptiles (lizards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insect meal (on the ground or in trees) Finely cut vegetables placed in a tree fork 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid meat Do not place vegetables on the ground –harmful to other animals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create ground habitat using logs, rocks and leaf litter

Table developed in consultation with ecologists, wildlife veterinarians, wildlife nutritionists and licensed rehabilitators. It is considered unnecessary, harmful or requires expert knowledge to offer food to animals not mentioned, even during times of natural disaster. The foods in the 'Don't use' column may cause poor health outcomes to the animal or to bushland ecology. Also see: [Helping koalas in emergencies](#) and [Helping flying-foxes in emergencies](#).