

Be careful around wildlife: protect yourself

Wildlife can carry diseases that are harmful to people, such as [Australian bat lyssavirus](#), [Q fever](#), [avian influenza](#), [salmonella infection](#) and [psittacosis](#).

When animals are sick or entangled in netting or powerlines, they can become distressed, aggressive, confused and tired. Heat stress may cause some animals to bite, scratch or experience seizures. Sick animals may not show symptoms and dead animals may still carry harmful diseases.

Disease spreading from animals to humans does not happen often but the risk increases when people handle sick, injured or dead animals.

Do not touch wildlife unless you are trained and wearing protective clothing such as gloves and a mask.

Never try to handle snakes, marine mammals, bats or flying foxes as these animals must be handled by trained professionals.

What should you do if you find sick, injured or orphaned wildlife?

Do not touch the animal unless you are trained, vaccinated against common animal diseases, and wearing protective clothing, as they may be distressed.

You should contact any of the below organisations for advice:

- local wildlife rehabilitation groups
- the [local council](#)
- the [nearest NSW National Parks area office](#) (1300 072 757) if the animal is located on NSW National Park land
- the [Environment Line](#) (131 555) to report suspected poisoning
- the RSPCA (1300 094 737)

Contact details for local wildlife rehabilitation organisations can be found at the NSW Department of Planning and Environment wildlife rehabilitation [website](#) or download the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) wildlife rescue [app](#).

Contact the [Emergency Animal Disease Hotline](#) (1800 675 888) to report a suspected outbreak of animal disease. **This hotline is not for general animal advice.**

If you must handle wildlife:

- wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after touching the animal
- wear a face mask, long-sleeved clothing, disposable gloves or gloves that can be disinfected, and shoes that can be cleaned
- use a towel, blanket or shovel as a barrier between yourself and the animal
- keep the animal in a warm, dark and quiet spot until you can get it to a wildlife group
- do not feed the animal or give it water
- keep children and pets away and do not let them near surfaces the animal may have touched
- if bitten or scratched, immediately wash the injury with soap and water for at least 15 minutes and apply an [antiseptic](#). Seek medical advice as soon as possible
- clean and disinfect any materials and equipment used

Speak to your doctor and [consider vaccination](#) if you have regular contact with animals. Rehabilitating native animals requires licensing and authorisation. A license is also required to keep most native animals as pets.

What should you do if you find dead wildlife?

Dead wildlife can still carry diseases harmful to people. Do not touch dead wildlife.

Contact the following organisations:

- the local Council for advice on safe disposal or removal
- NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service for dead animals on NSW National Park land
- the Environment Line to report deaths resulting from suspected poisoning
- the [Emergency Animal Disease Hotline](#) to report unusual signs of animal disease such as mass death. **This hotline is not for general animal advice or to report individual animal deaths**

If you must handle dead wildlife:

- ensure you are safe (away from a road or ledge)
- check for signs of life (breathing) before going near the animal
- wear a face mask, long-sleeved clothing, disposable gloves or gloves that can be disinfected, and shoes that can be cleaned
- use a towel, blanket or shovel as a barrier between yourself and the animal
- wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after touching the animal
- wash any clothing or clean and disinfect any equipment or materials that may have touched the animal
- keep children and pets away and do not let them near surfaces the animal may have touched

Look after your wellbeing

Seeing sick, injured and dead animals can be upsetting and impact on your mental wellbeing.

For mental health support:

- call the NSW Mental Health Line on 1800 011 511. It's free, open 24/7 and staffed by trained mental health professionals
- visit the [WIRES Mental Health Support](#) website
- visit the [Caring for Australian Wildlife Carers](#) website if you're a wildlife rehabilitator

Contact organisations

Wildlife rehabilitation organisations	NSW Heritage and Environment IFAW Wildlife rescue app (based on location)
RSPCA Wildlife Emergencies	1300 094 737
National Parks and Wildlife Service	1300 072 757
NSW Environment Protection Agency Environment Line:	131 555
NSW Wildlife Health Australia Coordinator	Submission Form for NSW WHA Coordinators
Emergency Animal Disease Hotline	Emergency Animal Disease Hotline (1800 675 888) Australian Government Outbreak – Report a Concern
Local Council based on address	
Mental health support for wildlife rehabilitators	NSW Mental Health Line (1800 011 511) For wildlife rehabilitators: Caring for Australian Wildlife Carers WIRES Mental Health Support