

Be careful around wildlife: protect yourself

Wildlife can carry diseases that can make people sick. These include [Australian bat lyssavirus](#), [Q fever](#), [salmonella](#), [psittacosis](#), and [avian influenza \(bird flu\)](#). Disease spreading from animals to humans does not happen often, but the risk increases when people handle animals, especially sick, injured, or dead animals.

Do not touch wildlife. Only trained people with the recommended vaccinations (relevant to their role) and correct protective equipment should handle wildlife.

If you see sick or dead animals: **Avoid, Record, Report.**

- **Avoid** contact with sick or dead wildlife and do not allow pets to touch or eat them.
- **Record** what you see if you see sick or dead animals
- **Report** what you see to the **Emergency Animal Disease hotline (EAD)** on **1800 675 888**

Never handle snakes, marine mammals, bats or flying foxes. These animals must be handled by specially trained professionals.

Emergency animal diseases

What is an emergency animal disease?

An emergency animal disease (EAD) is a disease in animals that can have impacts on Australia's wildlife, livestock and domestic animal populations. Some wildlife can carry diseases that can spread to humans.

Signs that might indicate an EAD in animals include:

- Unusual behaviours
- Unexplained neurological symptoms (such as loss of balance, tremors or paralysis)
- Physical signs of illness (ulcers, swelling, blisters)
- Sudden or unusually high numbers of animals becoming sick or dying
- Unusual or unexplained illnesses.

If you see any of these signs, **do not touch** the animal and keep children and pets away. Report any suspect cases in any species of animal to the EAD hotline on 1800 675 888.

The EAD hotline is for reporting animal disease. It is **not** a wildlife rescue or routine animal welfare service. If an animal has an obvious injury, such as being hit by a vehicle or is orphaned, contact your local wildlife rescue group, council or veterinarian.

Injured or orphaned wildlife

If you see injured or orphaned wildlife (e.g. from road trauma), do not touch the animal and contact someone who is trained to handle the animal.

Animals that are sick, injured, or entangled in netting, fencing or powerlines, can become distressed, aggressive, confused and tired. Heat stress and illness may cause some animals to bite, scratch, or experience seizures. Importantly some sick animals may not show obvious symptoms, and dead animals may still carry diseases.

For general animal advice including support with injured or orphaned wildlife, contact any of the below organisations:

- 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)

Find a [licensed wildlife rehabilitation provider](#) in NSW or download the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) wildlife rescue [app](#).

Only handle the animal if specifically advised by the organisation and follow their instructions and protective measures carefully. If you have **not** been asked to assist, do not touch the animal and wait for a trained person to attend.

If you regularly handle animals for work or volunteering, ask your GP about which [vaccinations](#) you need.

Only a licensed wildlife rehabilitation provider or registered veterinarian can take a sick, injured or orphaned native animal into care. Do not take it home or keep it as a pet.

Remember, if you suspect an animal disease, contact the Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) hotline (**1800 675 888**). **This hotline is not for general animal advice.**

If you work with birds or wildlife

If you work with birds or wildlife, follow your workplace infection control procedures and use personal protective equipment as indicated, such as P2 or N95 masks, goggles, gloves and protective clothing. Consider the potential risk of H5 avian influenza - more information is available in the [national guidelines for avian influenza, protecting people who work with birds and wildlife](#).

Dead wildlife

An animal may have died from injury or disease. **Do not touch or move it.**

If you suspect an [emergency animal disease](#):

- **Avoid** contact.
- **Record** what you see.
- **Report it to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline** on 1800 675 888 from anywhere in Australia.

Visit the [NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development website](#) for more information including disposal guidelines.

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.

In some circumstances, you may be advised to leave the dead animal where you found it. While this can be upsetting, it is important that you follow this advice and do not touch the animal, leaving it as it is so it can be examined and tested.

If you've been instructed to handle dead wildlife, keep yourself and others safe and follow safety instructions:

- ensure you are safe (away from a road or ledge) – if unsafe do not approach/handle
- check for signs of life (breathing) from a distance before going near the animal. You may consider gently prodding the animal to check for movement using an instrument such as a long stick.
- wear a face mask (preferably a P2/N95 mask), long clothing, eye protection, disposable gloves or gloves that can be disinfected, and shoes that can be cleaned
- use a no-touch technique and use equipment to handle the carcass (e.g. shovel, tongs) or at minimum use a towel or blanket to retrieve the animal to avoid contact
- 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 (including clothing) that may have touched the animal
- keep children and pets away and do not let them near surfaces the animal may have touched.

Mental Health and wellbeing

Seeing sick or dead wildlife can be upsetting. It may be especially difficult when animal loss impacts daily life, community, income or culture. Support is available through your GP and the services below. If someone's life is in immediate danger, call Triple Zero (000).

- Lifeline on 13 11 14, 24 hours a day
- Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636, 24 hours a day
- 13YARN on 13 92 76, 24 hours a day for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Transcultural Mental Health Line on 1800 648 911, Monday to Friday, 9 am to 4.30 pm
- NSW Mental Health Line on 1800 011 511, 24 hours a day
- Rural Adversity Mental Health Program
- Farmgate Support Program, call the NSW Mental Health Line on 1800 011 511 and ask about Farmgate support.