

Heat-stressed wildlife

Successive hot days can have serious and even fatal consequences for wildlife. It's important to identify the heat stress behaviours in wildlife. Here are some common signs for common critters:

Possums (especially ringtails)

- Out during the day (rather than sleeping/hiding)
- On the ground rather than in a tree
- Appear lethargic or unresponsive

Birds

- Seen with beaks open or panting
- Wings spread
- Generally won't fly away when approached

Koalas

- Found sitting at the base of trees
- Drinking from troughs or other water sources

Kangaroos/Wallabies

- Licking forearms
- Appearing lethargic



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So what can I do to help?

To help prevent heat stress on hot days, you can put out water in small shallow containers with different levels using sticks or rocks so that all different species can drink from it. The sticks and rocks prevents small animals from drowning. Remember to replenish the water regularly! It is best to leave water near native plants / trees.

- Provide some artificial shade for the animals in your yard.
- Keep cats and dogs safely inside where it's cooler for them and away from vulnerable wildlife.
- If you find a heat stressed possum or bird, you can carefully pick up the animal using a towel and protective gloves and place it into a secure box in a cool, dark, quiet area inside and out of the direct heat. Make sure the box has ventilation holes in it. Leave the animal undisturbed until safe to release in the cooler evening.
- Do not wrap the animal directly in a damp towel, however a damp towel can be placed on the top of the box for a short period.
- If you notice any signs of injuries such as burns to possum's feet, please take animal to the local veterinarian immediately or contact Wildlife Victoria for advice.
- If the animal cannot drink from a container, offer a drop from an eye dropper or a shallow spoon.
- You can use a spray bottle to mist over the animal (but not directly aimed at the animal).
- If the animal recovers it may be able to be returned back to the wild. Remember that possums will only be able to be released at night, as they are nocturnal. They should be placed at the base of the closest tree to where they were found.
- If the animal doesn't improve in 1-2 hours please take it to your local vet clinic. During transport please keep the environment in your car cool and quiet.



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