

TALK ON THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF MACROPODS BY PIA, OUR LOCAL FAWNA MACROPOD CARER

Macropod species we have here: Red Necked Wallaby (Pretty Face), Swamp Wallaby, Eastern Grey Kangaroo.

Why it is important that we DO NOT FEED THEM. They are naturally nomadic and cover a lot of ground. Macropods self-regulate their population, but if fed by humans they will hang around in the one place and lose their natural instincts. It gets worse with each generation as the young learn from the adults become more humanised. Non-natural food also brings problems and disease including lumpy jaw. Animals coming to the one feeding area brings risk of disease. Density of poo increases which in turn increases risk of disease for them and us. Q Fever is a risk to humans. There is a (expensive) vaccine available. Natalie has had the vaccine so talk to her if you want to know more. Be careful when handling droppings, ensure you wash your hands afterwards. Avoid accumulation of dropping in areas where children are playing.

Impact of Dogs on Macropods. They perceive them as a threat and it increases their stress levels to have them in their environment, including the smell of them as macropods rely heavily on their sense of smell. Mothers can lose Joeys out of their pouches if startled, including by predators. Macropods suffer from stress myopathy. Just 4 minutes of high stress can kill them, as their heart rate and body temperature rise rapidly and they struggle to recover from it. Ongoing stress in their environment impacts their health. Macropods are less likely to stay in an area where there are dogs.

Caring for Injured or Orphaned Macropods. First step is to ring FAWNA for guidance on what to do. Check dead female macropods for joeys in her pouch. If you find one attached to her, never try to pull it off as you will damage it. Caring for orphaned macropods requires a lot of knowledge, resources and support. Feeding them the wrong type of milk is really bad for them. FAWNA have a team of carers who are best placed to look after any injured/orphaned animals. Goolies have the option of getting trained as a carer and then will have access to the FAWNA support network. This requires an initial 2-day induction followed by specialised macropod rehabilitation training. See FAWNA website (www.fawna.com.au) for upcoming courses if interested. Dead macropods carcasses can be dragged into the bush to decompose.

What we can do to help Macropods. Charcoal can help them with digestive issues, sprinkle some around your block for them to find if they need it. They like to munch on rotting bark and the fungus that grows on it. Wallabies like a range of shrubs and plants to graze on. Minimise fencing and ensure your fencing is wildlife friendly. It needs to be visible and of a small gauge, so they can't get their feet stuck in it. Wire strands are a NO-NO as they can get tangled up in the wire. If you have vegetation obstructing their view of the fence then get some bright coloured tape (available in Bunnings) to help them realise there is something there. They dislike bright colours and will avoid them.

Other Interesting Facts on Macropods. They have 2 stomachs - their first stomach is for freshly eaten food and the second for fermenting. They regurgitate their food by throwing back their head and gagging to mix and move food between their stomachs. They tend to mate quickly and at night. They are fastidious groomers. Sitting with their tails between their legs allows them groom their tail and is also the position they adopt to allow the new born to travel from the birth canal up to the pouch. They can have young at three different stages simultaneously - one in utero, one in the pouch and one at foot.