

Media release

Bat alert – Don't touch, call free bat rescue service

Brisbane's bat rescue service today issued an urgent alert for residents to call the free rescue service if they see flying-foxes caught in backyard netting, barbed wire fencing or dead on powerlines.

The plea from Bat Conservation & Rescue Qld comes amidst an unusual spate of flying-fox electrocutions, net entanglements and a peak in flying-fox births.

"Never try to perform your own rescue. For your safety and for the sake of the flying-fox, always call a wildlife rescue service," BCRQ president Louise Saunders said.

"A frightened flying-fox is likely to bite or scratch, potentially exposing a well-meaning rescuer to the rare but deadly Australian Bat Lyssavirus disease.

"That inevitably means vaccinations for anyone bitten or scratched, and death for the flying-fox because Queensland Health requires them to be euthanased for testing.

"So far this month, we've been called out to more than 130 flying-fox rescues, the majority on powerlines and in backyard nets.

"It's important to call a rescuer even if a flying-fox on powerlines appears to be dead because they may have a live baby tucked up under their wing.

"We'd like to commend Energex for rescuing electrocuted mothers and babies off power lines each year. They do a wonderful job and respond quickly when needed.

"We also ask residents to use only wildlife friendly netting to protect backyard fruit trees from birds and bats. If you can poke your finger through a net, that means it is a death trap for wildlife.

"There are currently three flying-fox species in Brisbane – Black, Grey-headed and Little Red flying-foxes.

"There is enough food at the moment but the dry weather could make things tough for flying-foxes over the next few weeks. It is currently birthing time for Black and Grey-headed flying-foxes, which means they are extremely vulnerable to food shortages," Ms Saunders concluded.

Rules for human safety and flying-fox welfare

1. If you see a flying-fox in trouble, immediately call the 24 hour hotline 0488 228 134 or 1300 ANIMAL (1300 264 625).
Call if you see a flying-fox entangled in backyard netting, caught on barbed wire, on a powerline, alone in a tree during the day, or on the ground.
2. Do not touch flying-foxes. It is safe to be near flying-foxes but Australian Bat Lyssavirus can be transmitted through a bite or scratch.
3. If you find a flying-fox on the ground, move it without touching it (eg. gently with a shovel) to a safe place away from traffic or dogs and cover it with a towel and a weighted box.
4. If you find a flying-fox entangled on barbed wire or in a net, cover it with a towel to keep it calm.
5. Even if a flying-fox on powerlines is dead, call a rescuer because it may have a live baby.
6. To safely protect your backyard fruit from birds and flying-foxes, only use netting with a weave smaller than 1 cm. If you can poke your finger through a net, it is deadly to wildlife.

Contact for interview

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Images are available including of flying-foxes entangled in backyard netting, orphaned baby flying-foxes and rescued adults in care.