

## Media release

### Extreme heat event devastates Qld native Flying-fox colonies.

Thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, of native flying-foxes have died as a direct result of the weekend heat event with temperatures of over 43°C. The deaths will continue over the next few days as surviving orphans from dead mothers will slowly die of dehydration.

Many colonies across South-East Qld have been severely affected including those at Camira, Mt. Ommaney, Pan Pacific Gardens, Regents Park, Boonah, Bellmere, Pine Rivers and Palmwoods. Reports indicate all Western Suburbs colonies and inland, and colonies from Gympie down to Yamanto have been devastated.

Deaths include Grey Headed Flying-foxes which are on the vulnerable to extinction species list and Black Flying-foxes. Flying-foxes are Australia's only nocturnal, long-distance pollinator and seed disperser.

Volunteer rescuers have been overwhelmed with the mammoth task of collecting dead bodies and tending to survivors as part of their service to the community. Currently there are over 200 baby flying-foxes in care

"We have never seen this type of heat event devastation before and the massive amount of casualties as a result. From the initial call onwards, the camps fell like dominos." says Louise Saunders, President, BCRQ.

"A huge thank-you to all the dedicated volunteers who rallied to the call and worked so hard in the diabolical heat to save the bats that were still clinging to life".

Bat Conservation & Rescue Qld wish to thank the many residents adjacent to colonies who came to the carers and offered their assistance and support.

"Never try to perform your own rescue. For your safety and for the sake of flying-foxes, 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 Australian Bat Lyssavirus. Less than 0.5% of bats may have the virus, there is a safe vaccine to protect anyone who may be exposed. Anyone exposed to a scratch or bite must seek prompt medical attention.

"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.

#### **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. 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 they 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 could be 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.