COVID-19 Wildlife Rescue Advice

Monday 30 March 2020

The situation with COVID-19 is changing rapidly. Currently, Hunter Wildlife Rescue is operating normally and implementing plans to ensure we can continue to operate every day to assist sick, injured and orphaned wildlife.

We are following all government directives and taking precautionary measures advised by the NSW Department of Health so we will keep everyone up to date on any short-term changes to our wildlife rescue service.

The Management Committee of Hunter Wildlife Rescue have made the difficult decision to postpone all training and workshops until further notice. It is possible the situation may escalate further, and we will be monitoring the situation. The safety of our volunteers is a priority and we will continue to be guided by government directives.

COVID-19 and WILDLIFE RESCUE

- **If you find a sick, injured or orphaned native animal** please call our 24/7 helpline on 0418 628 483 or 0418 NATIVE.
- **If you have found a sick or injured animal that is safe to contain**, such as a bird, possum, lizard or turtle, it needs to be vet assessed as quickly as possible, please call your nearest vet prior to attending to discuss their current protocol and check if they are accepting wildlife at this time. **Vets have been confirmed as essential services** and are approved to stay open. Those that are open are likely to coordinate a contactless drop-off.
- **If you are in self-isolation or quarantine**, please make our rescuers aware on the call to our helpline.
- **Should a rescue be at your home and you or any members of your household are in isolation or quarantine** please remain inside while our rescuers conduct the rescue or remain 5 metres away from the rescuers and the animal.
- Please be aware that many of our volunteers may be in isolation or become unwell and we are likely to have less volunteers available than usual to assist with rescues. We thank you in advance for your support and patience.

Procedures to follow to Keep Safe

To keep safe at this time all community members and volunteers are advised to follow these hygiene procedures:

- Clean your hands thoroughly with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub regularly.
- Practice respiratory hygiene by covering your nose and mouth with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Dispose of the used tissue immediately.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.
- Avoid close contact with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms.
- Avoid close contact with other people by social distancing of 1.5m.

- Follow the NSW Health advice regarding 14-day isolation period after travel and/or contact with people who are ill or with any cold or flu symptoms.
- If you exhibit any symptoms such as fever, cough or difficulty breathing please follow Government Health Advice and contact your local heath authority.
- Stay informed and follow advice given by your healthcare provider.
- Wash hands thoroughly after being in contact with animals, their enclosures/cages or food containers.

Some important things to note:

- Transmission and risk are considered low when conducting outdoor activities.
- Mosquitos or other insects do not carry the disease.
- According to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) COVID-19 is not considered a zoonotic disease like rabies or ringworm and risk of transmission is not evident.
  The CDC recommends the following in relation to contact with animals: "You should restrict contact with pets and other animals while you are sick with COVID-19, just like you would around other people. Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, it is still recommended that people sick with COVID-19 limit contact with animals until more information is known about the virus."

Social Distancing Restrictions

Individual behaviour is a crucial factor in controlling the spread of COVID-19. Early self-isolation, seeking medical advice remotely (unless symptoms are severe) and personal social distancing are key. Social distancing helps slow the spread of viruses such as COVID-19 by reducing transmission between people and minimising the number of people who may require isolation. It may also reduce unnecessary testing.

- Wherever possible, keep a distance of at least 1.5 metres (m) between people.
- Spend less than 15 minutes of face-to-face contact when the distance is less than 1.5m.
- Spend less than 2 hours with others in any closed space, at a distance of at least 1.5m.
- No gatherings of more than 100 people in a closed space, at a distance of at least 1.5m.
- Implementing these measures early will assist to slow the spread of COVID-19 in your community.
- Community members who are in a higher risk category (such as those with a chronic illness and the elderly) should seek personalised advice from their healthcare provider on how best to manage their health risks during this time.

More information on COVID-19 with most up to date advice can be found via the below websites:

- **WHO**
- **US CDC**
- **Australian Dept of Health**
- **NSW Health website**

You can also call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080.

By following the advice given we can all do our bit to keep each other and wildlife safe. Thank you for your support and understanding during this crisis.