

TREE OF COMPASSION

ABN 65331932350



After Fire Animal Care

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HELPING THE WILDLIFE IN YOUR AREA AFTER A FIRE

Following a bushfire, many surviving wild animals may be injured or orphaned. Most will be displaced and looking for food and shelter. Because they have lost their habitat and are disorientated, they are often subject to secondary incidents such as predation or road strike.

Observe and take note what you see

If you happen to see an animal that is not behaving as you would expect it to, for example, a possum sitting on the ground or a kangaroo which doesn't move out of the way quickly when you approach, chances are that it is injured. If you are not able to safely capture the animal, take note of where you saw the animal, what species it was (if you can identify it) and what its behavior was like. For example, take note of what you saw – was it limping, was one of its eyes closed, was it bleeding, was it holding its head on the side, did it look burnt. Anything you observe will be useful. Make sure you mark the spot where you saw the animal, eg, with an empty can tied to the fence or tree. You may think at the time you can remember where you saw it but when it comes to someone else finding the location, this is not usually that easy. Then call your local wildlife group or a vet to report what you saw and ask for help.

Should you be able to catch the animal, make sure you do so as quickly and as stress-free as possible. Do not chase the animal. The animal will already be stressed from the fire and all that has subsequently occurred. You do not want to add to this. This is particularly so with kangaroos who often end up with capture myopathy, a condition which often leads to death.

Transporting the patient

You also need to be careful with transporting the animal. The animal should be placed in something secure where it is not likely to either escape or further injure itself. A secure box or cat carrier can be useful. For smaller animals like a sugar glider, a pillowcase with a tie is good. If it is a very young animal, keeping it warm (but not hot) and snug is very important. During transportation, turn the music off in the car and keep talking to a minimum. Make sure you keep any children away so they are not tempted to poke their fingers into the box or carrier cage.

Provide food, water & shelter

You can help the wildlife in your area but providing them with food, water and even shelter. If you have a dog or cat, please keep them inside or restrained for a few weeks after the bushfires. You can leave out study bowls of water for wildlife life on the ground or hanging water baths for birds. If you know that a substantially large area of bush has been burnt, leaving some food out for wildlife is a good idea to help them along. The nearest patch of bush may be too far initially for very weak animals to travel. On your property you may leave bales of lucerne hay for kangaroos and wallabies or chopped up fruit for possums and bats or bird seed for birds and so on.

Putting up nest boxes for birds and possums is also something beneficial you can do. These can be bought ready-made or you can make something up yourself. You could also hang hollow logs up in trees and also on the ground for small ground dwelling animals. Consider planting trees, shrubs and grasses which will attract wildlife. Some species are faster growing than others. Your local council may have more information on what species would be appropriate.