Isaac Regional Council residents have observed flying foxes foraging and roosting in residential gardens and urban parks.

Flying foxes play a vital role in ecosystem health. They forage on the fruit of native rainforests and vines as well as the nectar and pollen of native trees (particularly Eucalyptus, Melaleuca and Banksia species). As a consequence, flying foxes spread seed and pollen over long distances improving the health and diversity of native forests.

Flying foxes are unique animals that may be of great interest to children. They are safe to observe from a distance but children should be encouraged to remain calm and quiet and at a safe distance whilst observing them.

Three species of flying foxes are known to occur in the Isaac Regional Council area, the little-red flying fox (Pteropus scapulatus), the grey-headed flying fox (Pteropus poliocephalus) and the black flying fox (Pteropus alecto). All are protected under state legislation and the grey-headed flying fox is protected under federal legislation.

FLYING FOXES AND DISEASE
Any native animal can carry disease or cause injury. Flying foxes are known to host Hendra virus and Australian Bat Lyssavirus (ABL) although it is very unlikely that humans will catch these diseases from flying foxes.

Parents and educators should teach children not to disturb or handle flying foxes. If people do not interact with flying foxes then the risk of infection with Hendra virus or ABLV is very low.

Hendra Virus
Flying foxes are hosts for Hendra virus which can be passed onto horses. These infections are rare and may result in the death of a horse.

Humans are only known to have been infected by Hendra virus via close contact with infected horses. There is no evidence the virus can pass from flying foxes to humans directly.

Australian Bat Lyssavirus (ABL)
All bats, large and small (flying foxes and smaller insectivorous bats - also known as microbats), should be viewed as potentially infected with ABLV. Sick, stressed or injured bats acting strangely are more likely to be infected.

HANDLING FLYING FOXES
Do not attempt to capture or handle any bat (even if they are sick or injured) unless:
1. You are trained to handle wild animals/bats, AND
2. You are vaccinated against the ABLV

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE BEEN BITTEN OR SCRATCHED BY A FLYING FOX?
Immediately wash the wound gently with soap and water for at least 5 minutes. Do not scrub the wound. Apply an antiseptic such as povidone-iodine, iodine tincture, aqueous iodine solution or alcohol (ethanol) after washing.

If the exposure involves the person’s mucous membranes (eyes, nose or mouth), the area should be flushed thoroughly with water.

Do not dispose of the flying fox as it will need to be tested for infection.

Seek medical attention as soon as possible from your local doctor, your nearest public health unit or the 13 HEALTH information line (13 43 25 84).
IS IT POSSIBLE TO MOVE FLYING FOXES AWAY FROM A ROOST SITE OR FORAGING HABITAT?

There are no permanent flying fox camps within the townships of the Isaac Regional Council.

Little red flying foxes have established isolated temporary camps in Moranbah and other places, but will eventually self-disperse.

Flying fox camps and foraging habitat are protected in Queensland.

It is illegal to attempt to disperse flying fox camps without the appropriate permit.

Residents are reminded that activities that may result in the disturbance of a roosting flying fox camp or individual flying fox can result in prosecution under the *Nature Conservation Act 1994*.

Such activities may include whipper snipping or mowing under a flying fox camp where they are carried out deliberately and excessively with the intention of driving the flying foxes away.

Attempting to relocate a flying fox camp is complex and the stress caused to flying foxes is likely to result in:

- the camp remaining in place for a longer period of time than normal
- the formation of splinter colonies (spreading the flying foxes over a greater area)
- increased levels of stress-related disease within the camp
- erratic and unusual behaviour that increases the potential of human flying fox contact

HOW TO DISPOSE OF DEAD FLYING FOXES

Ensure the flying fox is dead. Do not directly touch the flying fox.

Use a shovel and/or tongs to remove it and place it in a plastic bag.

It is acceptable to dispose of the plastic bag containing the dead flying fox with your general rubbish in your wheelie bin or transfer it to your local landfill.

REPORTING DEAD OR INJURED BATS

- Department of Environment Services - 1300 130 372
- Biosecurity Queensland - 13 25 23
- RSPCA 1300 ANIMAL (1300 264 625)
- WIRES 1300 094 737

SUSPECTED CASES OF HENDRA VIRUS IN HORSES SHOULD BE NOTIFIED

- Biosecurity Queensland - 13 25 23