FLYING FOXES, DOGS & CATS

Isaac Regional Council residents walking their dogs may have observed flying foxes foraging and roosting in residential gardens, parks or reserves.

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.

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.

IS THERE A HEALTH RISK TO MY DOG OR CAT IF IT CATCHES A FLYING FOX?

No cats have been affected however council is aware of one confirmed case of a dog contracting Australian Bat Lyssarvirus (ABLV) from a flying fox. Two dogs have tested positive for Hendra virus. Both cases were on properties where Hendra virus had been confirmed in horses and followed close contact between the horse and dog, not close contact between the dog and flying foxes.

As a general precaution all sick horses should be isolated from all other animals.

The most effective way of reducing the exposure of pets to disease from flying foxes is to keep them away from roosting or foraging flying foxes.

If your dog or cat is bitten or scratched by a flying fox please contact your private veterinarian for advice.

IF YOU ARE INJURED

Immediately wash the wound gently with soap and water for at least 5 minutes.

Do not scrub the wound. Apply an antiseptic such as povidoneiodine, 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 from incorrect dispersal 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)

SUSPECTED CASES OF HENDRA VIRUS IN HORSES SHOULD BE NOTIFIED
- Biosecurity Queensland - 13 25 23

FACT OR FICTION
Arming ourselves with up to date information helps reduce misconceptions about flying foxes

FICTION
- Flying foxes numbers are in plague proportions
- Flying foxes are dirty
- Flying foxes pose significant health risks to humans and animals
- An individual can disperse in isolation without causing harm
- Once flying foxes start roosting they’ll be there until they are forced to move

FACT
- Records suggest that grey-headed flying foxes once numbered in the millions, but are now reduced to as few as 400,000
- The smell of a roost isn’t from droppings but from scent glands they use to communicate with each other
- You can’t contract viruses from living near a roost or under a fly-out or from bat droppings
- Foraging flying foxes are generally seasonal, short lived and can be managed
- Most flying foxes are highly transient with seasonal movements