

MEDIA RELEASE

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Domestic fruit tree netting laws change 1 September

Wildlife Victoria, the State's wildlife emergency rescue service, has reminded Victorian retailers and residents of the coming regulatory changes for domestic fruit tree netting.

The new regulation requires the mesh-size of domestic fruit tree netting, used or sold, to be 5mm x 5mm or less at full stretch from 1 September 2021. The regulation applies specifically to households.

Wildlife Victoria CEO Lisa Palma said the new regulation was well overdue and would save native animals' lives.

"We are very pleased to see the new laws come into effect, given that there is a significant detrimental impact on our wildlife as a result of the wider aperture netting that a lot of people use on their backyard fruit trees," she said.

Netting with holes large enough to poke a finger through is a trap for our wildlife. This netting often inflicts terrible injuries on delicate joints and membranes.

During 2020, Wildlife Victoria responded to 285 cases of wildlife caught in domestic fruit tree netting. These comprised 120 Grey-Headed Flying-Fox cases, 35 Magpie cases, 19 Rainbow Lorikeet cases, 16 Sulphur Crested Cockatoo cases and eight Ringtail possum cases.

"We believe our case numbers are just the tip of the iceberg. It's highly likely that a lot of animals may not be called in to Wildlife Victoria because they may already be deceased, or they haven't been noticed."

Ms Palma said attending a case where a small, fragile, innocent animal is trapped in domestic fruit tree netting can be a confronting task for Wildlife Victoria's volunteer rescuers.

"Honestly, when you go to someone's home and see a small animal struggling against the netting, it's a terribly sad situation. Many animals are so badly injured, they have to be euthanized," Ms Palma said.

"By switching to the appropriate netting domestic fruit tree growers will make a huge difference to wildlife welfare in this State."

"It's important for all Victorians to remember that as humans, we share our homes, backyards and landscape with native wildlife. It's their home too," Ms Palma said.

She encouraged anyone who noticed unsafe nets in their neighbourhood to download a letter from the Wildlife Victoria website to drop into the neighbour's letterbox.

The letter is available in English, Chinese, Italian and Greek.

Penalties will apply for advertising or offering non-compliant netting for sale and for using non-compliant netting in domestic settings.

ENDS

For general information and enquiries contact: media@wildlifevictoria.org.au

About Wildlife Victoria

- Wildlife Victoria is a not for profit wildlife Emergency Response Service that has been operating for more than 30 years as an independent, not-for-profit organisation focussed on the welfare of Australia's unique wildlife.
- Annually, Wildlife Victoria's Emergency Response Service receives more than 88,000 requests for assistance and assists over 50,000 sick, injured or orphaned animals.
- Wildlife Victoria educates the community about wildlife, and helps the community manage wildlife incidents.
- Wildlife Victoria advocates for wildlife whenever their welfare is under threat or compromised.