



Koalas

What do I do if a koala has been attacked by a dog?

Keep the dog inside and call us immediately to locate the nearest rescuer. If the koala has climbed up a tree, an assessment of the koala still needs to take place.

A koala with dog attack injuries



I have a koala in a tree outside my house

Ascertain if the koala is injured or if there are elements around the tree that mean it cannot or will not come down, for example, are there dogs around?

If there is nothing preventing the koala from coming down, then it can remain in the tree. It will probably be there for a day or two and then move on. Keep your dogs and cats away from the tree and let your neighbours know there is a koala in the area, especially if they have dogs.

If there have been dogs present, it can take 24 hours after the dogs' removal before the koala will come down. They have to feel confident that the danger is gone. People often think that as soon as they lock the dogs up the koala will come down – it won't.

If the koala is injured and up a tree then call us immediately on 03 8400 7300. Most experienced koala rescuers can successfully negotiate a koala down a tree at 8 metres or less.



We hope that by increasing your understanding and awareness of our beautiful wildlife, you feel empowered to deal with wildlife situations confidently in an informed, safe and appropriate manner. For support at any time, please call our emergency response service for advice on **03 8400 7300** or report the details on our website: www.wildlifelifevictoria.org.au.

ABN: 27 753 478 012



Koalas



Image: Sharon McKay

A koala is in the middle of the town

Koalas will often pass through country towns.

There is no need to rescue the koala although it is important to let a local shelter know so they can keep tabs on the koala's movement in case a situation arises.

Larger towns/cities, for example Warrnambool, with a rural population of 30,000, may have koalas passing through the town. In this case, note the location of the koala and if it is in a precarious location, notify a shelter with experience in koalas.

A koala passing through Warrnambool

There is a koala on my roof

When a healthy koala is found on the roof of a property, it is usually because of dogs. Restrain the dogs inside and leave a ladder for the koala to climb down. The ladder can often speed up the process and allow the koala to move on safely.

Look for any injuries to ensure that it is indeed a healthy koala and has not been attacked by the dogs.

A koala has been in the same tree for 3 days; is something wrong with it?

If a koala has been in the same tree (stagnant) for longer than 3 days, it could be because of dogs or health issues and a rescuer needs to be sent out to assess it.

Koalas should have moved on from the tree within three days.

It could also be because a koala is feeding in another tree and coming back to rest in the same tree. The caller may not notice these movements and the koala could be perfectly healthy. A rescuer is still needed to check if the koala has injuries or is inhibited by another animal or structure.

Koala rescue with the help of the CFA



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A koala has been trampled by cattle; is this normal?

Many koalas are killed or injured each year when cows with calves at heel form a group to circle and trample koalas that have climbed down to the ground to change trees. The koala is perceived as a threat to the calf, so mothers are more protective during this season.

Some cows will act aggressively towards the koala fearful that the koala may harm their calf. A rescuer must be sent out as the koala will often be injured. If it is during baby season (November to February), please look out for a joey that may have been thrown off the mother's back.

Interesting facts

- Koalas are not from the bear family; they are marsupials and their closest living relative is the wombat.
- Koalas live for up to 20 years in the wild.
- Koalas only have one offspring in a year, usually in summer. They may not breed every year; breeding is very dependent on environmental conditions. A young joey is born after just 33-35 days of gestation, and remains in the pouch for six months.



Distribution and habitat

Koalas are found primarily along the south east coast of Australia. They have home ranges consisting of several food trees and resting trees which they will go between. Although koalas do not share their territory, they do overlap with their neighbouring koalas, allowing for social interaction and mating. Males have dark stained scent glands at the top of their chests that they use to mark their territory with.

Diet

Koalas eat the leaves of eucalyptus trees. One koala will usually eat from one or two different species of the 600+ eucalypts in Australia. This diet is low-energy and low-nutrient, so koalas have a limited amount of energy available to use and spend up to 20 hours per day sleeping. Travelling between food patches is also very labour intensive for a koala. This highlights problems with fragmentation of habitat, and habitat loss caused by land clearing and logging.

Breeding

Between August and March, Wildlife Victoria often receives calls about 'fighting' koalas. Their mating rituals are quite violent, often ending in lots of loud vocalisation and potentially an injured or exhausted female post-mating. It is not wise to interrupt the mating rituals of any animal, but if you are concerned, please call Wildlife Victoria. After a gestation period and six months in its mother's pouch, the joey will primarily ride on its mother's back until it is independent at around one year old.

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