

Easy Reference Sheet

Caring for Bandicoots & Small Mammals

Version: January 2021

Small Mammals is a term generally used in wildlife rehabilitation to refer to small terrestrial carnivorous marsupial and eutherian mammals. This includes species such as bandicoots, antechinus, phascogales and native rodents. There are over 12 common species of 'small mammals' found in South-east Queensland. They are all mostly nocturnal and have specialised diets dependent upon the species.

Do I need a Permit to care for small mammals?

Yes. You will need a REHABILITATION PERMIT to care for small mammals.

A Rehabilitation Permit can be obtained from a licensed wildlife care group such as Wildcare.

Remember all Australian native wildlife is protected in Queensland. You cannot keep them without an appropriate Permit.

Do I have to do any training to care for small mammals?

Yes. Small mammals have specialised dietary and housing requirements. They often come into care due to illness, injury or as a result of being orphaned. You must have a good understanding of their biology, be able to recognise signs of illness and injury and be able to provide emergency care to them.

In Wildcare, you will need to complete the following training workshops in order to care for small mammals:-

- Orientation – compulsory for all members
- Rescue and First Aid for Wildlife (Basic) – compulsory for all members
- Caring for Orphaned Mammals
- Bandicoots, Small Carnivorous Marsupials and Native Rodents

Is caring for small mammals difficult?

Caring for common species of small mammals is a relatively good place to start as a wildlife rehabilitator if you wish to care for mammals. Like all of our native wildlife, they do have specialised requirements.

Remember:-

- Small mammals are **nocturnal** – they require feeding and monitoring at night.
- They are largely **carnivorous** – you must be able to provide a large variety of fresh food such as insects, grubs, and worms every day.
- Their greatest **predators** are domestic pets, such as dogs and cats – they cannot be housed near domestic animals.
- Orphans need to be fed **every 3 to 4 hours** (including through the night).
- They are very good escape-artists so you need to have **secure enclosures** to house them in however they cannot be housed in wire cages.
- They are **fast growing** so generally only require care for a relatively short period of time. For example, orphaned bandicoots and antechinus are generally ready for released within 6-8 weeks of coming into care.
- We do not get many small mammals into care so most wildlife rehabilitators will care for small mammals in conjunction with other species.

Remember, we raise to RELEASE!

We must care for wildlife in a way that ensures their survival once returned to the wild.

What equipment do I need to care for small mammals?

Small mammals need to be housed and cared for during rehabilitation to prevent further injury, prevent escape, minimise stress and to allow them to display their natural behaviour.

A few things we must consider when housing small mammals include:-

- Some species are arboreal and therefore require enclosures that are tall and wide to accommodate large branches.
- Terrestrial species require deep, large enclosures with smooth sides and a substrate of soil and leaf litter.
- Enclosures must be made from thin mesh (not wire mesh) to prevent small species and live insects from escaping.
- Injured and sick animals must be housed indoors.
- They are highly prone to stress and require a quiet environment.

Below is a brief overview of some of the equipment that small mammals require. The Wildcare small mammal training workshop and manual covers their requirements in more detail.

Rescue Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium plastic storage container with well-ventilated secure lid • Clean, second-hand towels to line container • Small pouches for orphaned joeys
Orphaned Small Mammals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeding equipment (syringes, specially made latex teats, cannulas, sterilising equipment, small feeding bowls) • Lots of cotton pouches (20+ each animal) • Small baby blankets and towels. • Large plastic container (250+ litre) with secure screened lid • Logs and branches for enclosure • Specialised heating equipment (if caring for unfurred and just-furred joeys) • Insect farms or access to a large variety and quantity of live insects such as crickets, wood cockroaches, worms, larvae, stick insects.
Adult Small Mammals <i>Critical Care Stage</i> <i>Intermediate Care Stage</i> <i>Pre-Release and Final Rehabilitation Stage</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep, solid plastic container (0.5m L x 0.5m W x 0.5m H) • Small ceramic bowls for water and food • Large quantity of clean towels or small blankets for lining enclosure • Clean, suitable substrate (such as soil and leaf litter) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep, solid plastic container (1.0m L x 1.0m W x 1.0m H) • Small ceramic bowls for water and food • Large quantity of clean towels and small blankets for lining enclosure • Clean, suitable substrate (such as soil and leaf litter) • Small logs and branches (dependent upon the species) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large outdoor enclosure (minimum size 4.0m L x 3.0m W x 2.0m H) • Sides must be constructed from tin/colourbond to prevent escape and be dug into ground at least 60cm to prevent digging underneath (for bandicoots) • Enclosure must allow for access to both shade and sun • Substrate must include large amounts of natural leaf litter and soil to encourage foraging and low shrubs/vegetation to provide cover • Large logs and branches to allow for climbing and places to build a nest • Arboreal species will require an artificial nest box suitable to the species • Small to medium ceramic bowls for water and food

Critical Care Stage – designed to reduce an animal’s level of physical activity for a short period of time and to provide easy access for monitoring, treatment and feeding.

Intermediate Care Stage – allows sufficient space for some physical activity while enabling the animal to be readily caught for monitoring and treatment.

Pre-Release/Final Rehabilitation Stage – allows an animal to regain better physical condition, display natural behaviour, acclimatise to normal weather conditions and reduce human contact.

The measurements for enclosures listed above are sourced from the *Code of Practice – Care of Sick, Injured and Orphaned Protected Animals in Queensland* (EHP). In some circumstances, Wildcare’s housing requirements exceed the CoP suggestions.