

Easy Reference Sheet

Caring for Bats

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There are 77 species of bats in Australia. In South-east Queensland, the most common bats coming into care are three species of flying foxes and a number of species of insectivorous bats. All Australian bats are nocturnal and have specialised diets.

Do I need a Permit to care for bats?

Yes. You will need a REHABILITATION PERMIT to care for bats.

A Rehabilitation Permit can be obtained from a licensed wildlife care group such as Wildcare. You must also be vaccinated against Australian Bat Lyssavirus. For information on ABL and handling requirements, visit www.health.qld.gov.au and www.des.qld.gov.au.

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 bats?

Yes. All species of bats have specialised dietary and housing requirements. They often come into care due to habitat loss, 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.

Wildcare recommends that if you wish to rescue and/or care for bats, that you join a dedicated bat group. There are several groups in South-east Queensland including:

Bats Qld (Flying Foxes and Microbats Inc).	www.batsqld.org.au
Bat Conservation and Rescue Qld Inc	www.bats.org.au
Bat Rescue Inc. (Australia)	www.batrescue.org.au

Wildcare currently offers training in the rescue and care of microbats each year.

Is caring for bats difficult?

Caring for common species of megabats (flying foxes) is suitable for new carers under the supervision of an experienced bat carer. Microbats (insectivorous bats) are more specialised and would be more suited to wildlife carers with a little more experience.

Remember:

- Bats are **nocturnal** – you need to be available to care for them at night.
- Bats are very **social animals** – they must be raised with others of their own species.
- They have specialised diets – you must be able to source their natural diet for them every day.
- One of their **predators** is the domestic pet – they cannot be housed near domestic animals.
- Orphaned bats need to be fed **every 4 to 5 hours** (including through the night).
- Older bats must be housed in a **large outdoor flight aviary** so that they can gain the strength to fly long distances.
- You must be vaccinated against ABL to rescue or care for any species of bat.

Once you have cared for common species of bats, then you may be ready to move onto caring for more specialised 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 bats?

Bats 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 bats include:

- All species have the potential to carry Australian Bat Lyssavirus and therefore all enclosures must be well secured and locked to prevent any unvaccinated person accidentally coming into contact with them.
- All species require large enclosures to allow them adequate room to fly.
- Microbats have highly specialised requirements and large flight enclosures.

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

Rescue Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium sized plastic or wire cages for housing adults or juveniles • Towels and small blankets for lining enclosure and for handling bats • Strong, leather gloves for handling all species • Long-sleeved shirt and protective gauntlets for handling large species
Orphaned Bats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeding equipment (syringes, specially made latex teats, cannulas, sterilising equipment, small feeding bowls) • Lots of cotton bat wraps (30+ each animal) • Lots of facecloths (for use as a mummy-roll) • Small baby blankets and towels • Tree forks and/or hanging clothes ainer • Specialised heating equipment (if caring for very young babies)
Adult Bats <i>Critical Care Stage</i> <i>Intermediate Care Stage</i> <i>Pre-Release and Final Rehabilitation Stage</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure, quiet room • Large wire cage with branches (0.8m L x 0.6m W x 0.6m H) • Towels and small blankets • Stainless steel coop cups for holding food and water <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure, quiet room • Large wire cage with branches (1.0m L x 1.0m W x 1.0m H) • Towels and small blankets • Stainless steel coop cups for holding food and water • Small water containers for holding fresh vegetation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure outdoor aviary/enclosure (minimum 10.0m L x 4.0m W x 2.0m H) • Enclosure must have adequate amount of shade with some areas where access to sun is possible • Water containers for holding native vegetation • Stainless steel coop cups for holding food and water • Hanging implements for holding fresh fruit

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.