

Easy Reference Sheet

Caring for Koalas

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In South-east Queensland, the koala population is declining due to their habitat being significantly degraded. The koala is nocturnal and has a highly specialised diet consisting of a relatively small number of eucalypt species.

Do I need a Permit to care for koalas?

Yes. You will need a REHABILITATION PERMIT to care for koalas. Koalas are considered a 'specialised species' in Queensland and are excluded from a General Rehabilitation Permit. A Rehabilitation Permit can be obtained from a licensed wildlife care group such as WILDCARE AUSTRALIA INC. There is a higher assessment criterion required and permits for koalas will only be issued to wildlife volunteers that have gained extensive experience with rescuing koalas and volunteering with them through either a wildlife facility or experienced koala carer. You must also be able to display a good understanding of their anatomy and biology.

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 koalas?

Yes. Koalas have highly specialised dietary and housing requirements. They often come into care due to loss of habitat, injury, disease 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 koalas:

- Orientation – compulsory for all members
- Rescue and First Aid for Wildlife (Basic) – compulsory for all members
- Caring for Orphaned Mammals
- Wildlife Rescue (Advanced)
- Advanced Koala Rehabilitation

Is caring for koalas difficult?

Caring for koalas is a highly specialised area of wildlife rehabilitation. They have a poor immune system and succumb to stress-related disease easily. They are difficult animals to handle and require a large purpose-built outdoor enclosure. They have very specialised dietary requirements and finding sufficient quantities of their favoured eucalypt species in South-east Queensland is very time-consuming. They are not suitable for new wildlife carers.

Remember:

- Koalas are **nocturnal** - you need to be available to care for them at night.
- They have a **specialised diet** – you must be able to identify koala food tree species and be able to obtain a large amount of fresh eucalypt every day.
- One of their **predators** is domestic dogs – they cannot be housed near or have contact with your pets.
- A large part of their rehabilitation requires a **large purpose-built outdoor enclosure**.

Koala rehabilitation is an area that you may be interested in once you have been caring for wildlife for a few years and have gained some experience with rescuing them.

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 koalas?

Koalas 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 koalas include:

- Enclosures must contain a large number of study tree forks and horizontal branches to imitate a tree-like environment.
- Enclosures must be made snake proof.
- Enclosures need to be made from strong square gauge wire and include adequate ventilation to prevent overheating.
- Orphaned and very sick animals must be housed indoors.
- Enclosures will require large water containers for holding fresh vegetation.

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

Rescue Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large, wire rescue cage with top-opening lid • Clean towels and blankets to line cage • Pouches for orphaned koalas
Orphaned Koalas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeding equipment (syringes, specially made latex teats, cannulas, sterilising equipment, small feeding bowls, specialised glass syringes) • Lots of cotton pouches (30+ each animal) • Small baby blankets and towels. • Large, solid cane basket • Tree forks with stands suitable for indoor use • Water containers for holding fresh vegetation • Specialised heating equipment (if caring for unfurred joeys)
Adult Koalas <i>Critical Care Stage</i> <i>Intermediate Care Stage</i> <i>Pre-Release and Final Rehabilitation Stage</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solid wire mesh enclosure with sturdy branches (1.0m L x 1.0m W x 1.0m H) • Soft bedding including doonas, blankets, towels. • Medium sized water containers for holding fresh vegetation • Solid wire mesh enclosure with tree forks and sturdy branches (2.0m L x 1.0m W x 2.0m H) • Large water containers for holding fresh vegetation • Large outdoor enclosure (minimum size 4.0m L x 3.0m W x 3.0m H) • Enclosure must have adequate amount of shade with some areas where access to sun is possible • Large tree forks and branches for climbing • Large water containers for holding fresh vegetation

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.