

# Easy Reference Sheet

## Use of Injured Wildlife Images on Social Media

August 2020

### Introduction

Social media is a powerful tool in educating and raising awareness of the plight of our native wildlife – on both the public Wildcare social media platforms, the members-only Wildcare Facebook groups as well as your own social media platforms. However, distressing or graphic images of injured wildlife may be unsettling to both the public and our fellow Wildcare volunteers who may be sensitive to such content. It is a delicate balance. We wish to educate and inform, however we must be mindful of the content we post.

### Sharing images of injured wildlife to Wildcare Community Facebook page

Please be mindful of sharing potentially distressing images to the Wildcare Community Facebook page. They may not necessarily be your image, but a post from a source such as another rescue group, wildlife hospital or news outlet that you are looking at sharing.

Our active wildlife rescuers and carers see first-hand the pain and suffering that our wildlife have to endure. Seeing these images in the Wildcare Community group is an unsettling reminder of the suffering they have witnessed first-hand.

Posting photos of wildlife suffering in pain and distress may cause anguish for many members of the group. Even some of our most experienced wildlife volunteers struggle from repeatedly seeing photos and videos of distressed wildlife and many of our new volunteers find these images far too confronting.

We must also be mindful that most wildlife volunteers will already be subscribed to the pages/groups/sites where the post originated from, so they have already seen it. During natural disasters (such as bushfires), the same image and story can show in someone's Facebook Newsfeed 20+ times a day. It is not necessary to therefore share those stories to the Wildcare Community group as well.

Our aim with the Wildcare Community Facebook group is to keep the content **informative** and **positive**.

### Photographing injured wildlife at rescues

First and foremost, in any rescue situation, the animal's welfare is paramount. Do not take any photo or video of an animal if doing so will cause undue stress to it.

Instances where taking a photo/video would be **inappropriate** might include:

- The animal is suffering from significant trauma (e.g. blood, severe trauma-related injuries, respiratory distress, showing neurological signs such as having seizures);
- The animal requires immediate warmth and care such as orphaned joeys or baby birds that are very cold and require immediate heat;

- The animal requires immediate euthanasia, in which case the animal should be transported to the closest vet, wildlife hospital or Trauma Carer immediately. A photo of the animal's injuries can be taken once the animal has been euthanised; or
- The animal is at risk of escaping from the rescuer's hold or from the transport carrier.

Instances where taking a photo/video **may be appropriate** might include:

- To send to a Species Coordinator to aid in species identification;
- To send to a Species Coordinator or vet to aid assessment of injuries and to seek instructions for the immediate outcome of the animal; or
- Where the photo or video may have value as an educational tool provided that by doing so will not cause undue stress to the animal.

*\*\* Please note that the above points are examples only and the list is not exhaustive.*

When taking a photo of a rescued animal, please ensure it takes no more than 5 seconds to take the photograph. If you are attending a rescue with another person/s, it may be more appropriate for the other person/s to take the image while you are performing the rescue if they are not needed for assistance.

Remember, time is of the essence with trauma related injuries and obtaining urgent medical attention is the primary objective.

## Photographing wildlife in care

There are a lot of reasons why wildlife carers take photographs of the animals in their care including:

- To document the animal's growth, particularly for orphaned joeys and baby birds;
- To document the improvement (or decline) of an animal's rehabilitation progress which can be a valuable tool in discussing treatment options with the animal's vet; and
- Documenting injuries or conditions for inclusion in Wildcare training materials;
- Species identification during various growth stages; and
- Because they are all individuals and carers like to keep a reminder of the animals that they have cared for.

When taking photographs of animals in care, it is important to again remember a few points including:

- For newly arrived animals in care, let them settle in for a day or two before taking photos. This is particularly important for those animals that had a stressful rescue or orphaning process. Remember – stress can kill so we want to minimise stress as much as possible.
- Don't disturb an animal just to take a photo. Take the photo when the animal is already active such as at feeding times, when weighing or before/after cleaning their enclosure.
- Do not 'stage' the animal for the sake of a photo. Don't place them in a position or location that is unnatural or stressful.
- Turn the flash off your camera and use the zoom function to get a close-up shot.

## Photographing deceased wildlife

An image of a deceased animal can also be a powerful tool for raising awareness of the plight of our wildlife. However, it too may cause anguish. Any animal showing significant blood, injuries and exposed internal organs, is not appropriate for posting on social media. As an animal welfare group, we respect a deceased animal whom has suffered significant external trauma and died as a result.

Photographs of deceased animals evidencing injuries and disease are very useful tools for training purposes for wildlife volunteers. Photos that are in focus, well-lit with minimal background are ideal for this purpose. The Wildcare Education Team are always looking for educational photographs for training purposes.

## Wildcare Public Facebook page

Wildcare chooses to be very selective about the images it shares to our public Facebook page. Whilst other groups may utilise graphic imagery on their social media platforms, we refrain from doing so as they inevitably cause distress to our supporters.

We do ask that whilst you are representing Wildcare, that you also be mindful of sharing graphic images in your own social media pages.

## Photograph ideas for use in social media

There are many impactful ways that images can be taken using certain angles to convey an important message that are not graphic and are as equally powerful:

1. Image of a deceased animal's paw in your hand.
2. Image of the deceased animal thoughtfully wrapped in a blanket or pouch. Where the animal has not suffered any head trauma, a photo showing the head may be appropriate.
3. An image converted to black/white may be less graphic, particularly where there is some evidence of blood on the fur/skin.
4. Image of the road where you rescued the animal from to convey road awareness – e.g. a speed limit sign, koala/kangaroo sign, green and yellow painted wildlife crossing area.
5. Image showing lack of habitat where the animal was found.
6. Image of built up areas showing the importance of helping our wildlife.

## Social Media Coordinator – Heidi Cuschieri

Social media can be a tricky place to navigate in terms of what content to post. As rescuers, we see first-hand the tragic situations our native animals have endured and it is our responsibility and mission to educate the public on how they can help any animal who needs assistance. These guidelines endeavour to assist in placing some parameters. It is however often a grey area, therefore if you are ever unsure, please don't hesitate to contact our Social Media Coordinator, Heidi Cuschieri on [heidi@wildcare.org.au](mailto:heidi@wildcare.org.au)