

Sick and injured koalas

Normal behaviour of a wild koala

Healthy wild koalas will try to avoid people by moving away or climbing a tree, and may scratch and bite if approached or handled.

Typical symptoms and behaviours of sick and injured koalas

Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not respond when startled or approached • Able to be approached • Remaining in the same tree for an extended period of time (i.e. longer than a few days - particularly so if the tree is not a koala food tree) • Obvious signs of pain and suffering
Eyes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discharge of mucus from eyes • Swollen eyes • Absence of fur immediately around the eyes
Mouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dribbling saliva from its mouth
Teeth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teeth grinding (but not eating gum leaves)
Chin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skin is a blue-ish colour
Body condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matted fur • A brown staining on the fur around the koala's rump • Obvious sign of injury (e.g. broken limbs, open wounds) • Very skinny
Movement - how it moves when climbing trees and walking on the ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unco-ordinated (wobbly) • Not using all four limbs when walking or climbing • Disorientated • Unable to climb a tree • On the ground and not moving*
Resting place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a tree but low to the ground • Sitting or lying on the ground for an extended period*

* Note: It is common for koalas to come down from trees during periods of extreme hot weather to find a cool spot on the ground. You may wish to leave water out for koalas (and other wildlife), however do not try to pat or pick them up as this will cause additional stress and may result in injury to both you and the koala. If a koala remains on the ground after the hot weather has passed please contact your local DENR office during business hours.

What to do

Where koalas are sick or injured, or where joey koalas are orphaned, contact your local Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) office during business hours.

Handling sick or injured koalas

Sick or injured koalas require specialised handling otherwise the koala may suffer further injury and stress and the handler may suffer from bites and scratches.

Sick or injured koalas are generally not captured from trees by DENR staff when they are above head height due to the risk of injury to staff.

Fate of sick or injured koalas

Sick or injured koalas will be examined by the DENR Duty Ranger.

The initial examination of a koala involves observing and recording the following information about its condition, including:

weight	faeces	hydration
body condition	eyes	abdominal palpitation
demeanour	nasal discharge	drinking water
general body condition	mobility	pain
fur condition	fractures	burns
skin condition	puncture wounds	other conditions
breathing	abrasions, bleeding	

The welfare of the koala is the primary focus - the extent of its injuries will be assessed and used to determine subsequent options for treatment. Some koalas can be released immediately after treatment, whereas others may be kept for 24 hours so their injuries can be treated and their health monitored and re-assessed. Sadly, some koalas have to be humanely euthanased due to the extent of their injuries.

Euthanasia of koalas

Any decision to euthanase a koala is made after careful consideration of the health and welfare of the individual animal and its chances of survival. DENR officers involved in animal euthanasia are professionally trained and treat each animal with care, dignity and respect.