

Do not feed wildlife

It alters their natural behaviour in the wild

When fed by people, animals in the wild become less experienced at foraging for their natural food. They may lose their fear of people and approach them for food.

It is important that wildlife show a natural wariness towards people, particularly as there are people that do not like animals and may intentionally harm them.

There are people who are afraid of animals who may accidentally injure an animal (who approaches them food) in an attempt to defend themselves against a mistaken 'attack'.

It contributes to their overpopulation

In the wild, the reproductive rate and the numbers of native animals surviving is often determined by how much natural food is available.

When food becomes too easily available native animals can gather in large numbers. Offering an unnatural food supply can result in native animals producing more young which the natural food supply can't support.

If the unnatural food source is removed, the natural food sources are all used up because of overpopulation. Native animals may then starve to death.

It makes some animals aggressive

Some species of native animal are territorial. They do not generally interact with others of their own species except during their breeding season and when raising their young.

It is important to remember that wildlife are opportunistic feeders. Artificial feeding can result in overcrowding because more animals are enticed to an easy food option, leading to aggression as the animals compete for food.

Both animals and people can be injured by aggressive behaviour in animals, particularly as animals become more and more brazen in their attempts to get food.

Feeding wildlife may increase the population of some species (eg magpies and ravens) who may aggressively defend the area, pushing out other species.

It causes poor nutrition

Native animals have specialised diets. Processed foods, such as bread, do not provide appropriate nutrition for native animals. They also contain additives which can cause serious health problems or even death.

It contributes to the presence of vermin

In some places where people commonly feed native animals such as ducks, tortoises and swans, uneaten food attracts rats and mice, as well as foxes.

Foxes prey on the wildlife that people have been feeding.

It spreads disease

When food is readily available, native animals can gather in unusually large numbers. Animals crowding at artificial feeding sites can also transmit diseases to other animals more quickly.

Birds are also susceptible to diseases caused by dirty bird feeders (eg bird seed going mouldy in bird feeders).

It is important to remember that some native animals may carry disease. Some of these diseases have the potential to be spread to people. For further information on animal health please visit the Australian Wildlife Health Network: www.wildlifehealth.org.au

It can often lead to property damage from unwelcome wildlife

Many people do not consider that feeding wildlife can have an impact on their neighbours.

Feeding one animal can soon lead to having many more animals to feed.

Native animals may begin pestering neighbours for food handouts as they expect to be fed and have lost their fear of people. They may also cause damage to peoples' homes or property.

For example, large numbers of birds resting on house roofs waiting for their free feed leave bird droppings which are unsightly. Excessive bird droppings can also affect rainwater tank water quality and pose a health risk.

It affects water and environmental quality

Where large numbers of ducks and waterfowl congregate at ponds and lakes, excess nutrients caused by an unnaturally high amount of duck droppings can result in water quality problems. These can include summer algal blooms and unsafe bacteria levels in the water.

Large numbers of native animals which congregate in public areas also defecate on lawns and walkways, which impacts on the environmental state of the area.

