

## Pets & Wildlife

Sharing your life with animals can be just great. Dogs, cats and other animals can make terrific pets, and you probably share your life with wildlife too. In Redland Shire we are lucky to have a great diversity of wildlife that share their living areas with us.

Sometimes it can be hard to make sure your pets live in harmony with local wildlife. In Redland Shire one koala dies every week from dog attacks (Source: Queensland Department of Environment April 1997). Many other wildlife species are also attacked by dogs and cats, which is very sad, unnecessary and easy to prevent.

This information sheet contains some tips on how pets and wildlife can live in peace.

### Preventing Wildlife Injuries & Deaths - What You Can Do!

#### Keep cats and dogs indoors at night

Most wildlife, including koalas, are more active at night than they are during the day. At night, keep cats and dogs indoors with you (they'll love the company!) or confine them in an enclosure away from trees and other areas that koalas, possums, bandicoots, lizards and other wildlife use. Another way to keep dogs away from wildlife at night is to keep them in a den (described over the page).

#### Control animals during the day

If your pet is worrying wildlife, move it away from the area and secure it (eg. on a chain or inside the house). With time, the koala or other animal will seek a more secure or sheltered area (eg. the koala will come down from the tree and move on its way). Be patient with wildlife and give plenty of time for them to find somewhere else to be. A koala may stay in your tree for the rest of the day (or longer), waiting until dark to move.

#### Provide a good habitat for wildlife

Provide pet-free areas in your garden that wildlife can get to and feel secure (eg. dense shrubs, "safe" trees that the dogs cannot get to and that cats can not climb). Build possum or bird boxes high up in these "safe" trees, so the animals can hide. Try and also provide areas for wildlife that spend a lot or all their time on the ground, such as pigeons, bandicoots and lizards eg. fence off garden beds.

#### Dogs & Wildlife

Statistics have shown that dogs that are the greatest danger to koalas are either over 8kg in weight or in the company of other dogs. A single dog weighing less than 8kg is not considered to be a great threat to a koala, however it can still cause considerable injury, or kill, other wild animals.

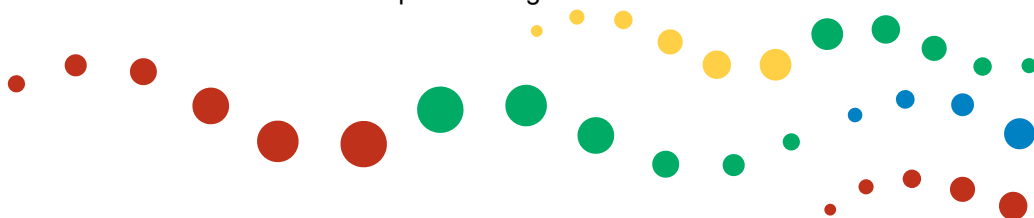


#### Train your dog not to attack wildlife

If you see or hear your dog barking at wildlife use the 'Good Dog - Bad Dog' routine to correct its behaviour, are described in more detail over the page, along with other techniques which can be used.

#### Put two bells on your dog's collar

Though this won't stop your dog from attacking wildlife, it does help you to hear where your dog is and have some idea what it is doing. You will get to know the amount of sound made when the dog is 'too' active or when it is in a forbidden part of the garden.





### Training Your Dog

The correct use of gentle discipline will help stop your dog attacking wildlife.

1. Discipline your dog **EVERY** time it attempts to attack wildlife. The more often it gets away with an attack the less successful your disciplining will be. When you first start training your dog, you may need to confine it when you're not there so it cannot get to wildlife and only allow it freedom when you have the time to correct any misbehaviour.
2. The "Bad Dog - Good Dog" routine is the best form of discipline. As soon as your dog shows an interest in wildlife, shout "NO - BAD DOG" at it to stop it in its tracks.
3. If the dog stops, command the dog in an encouraging, friendly tone to "COME" to you (and to move away from the wildlife). If it does this 'good' action, praise it for being a "GOOD DOG". Then take the dog away from where the wildlife is and totally distract it by playing a game with it, such as throwing a ball for it, so it forgets about the wildlife.
4. Another method is to hose or throw a water bomb at your dog when it is barking at wildlife (be careful not to frighten the wildlife though!). This will not harm your dog, but will make it associate something bad happening to it when it approaches wildlife. If you do this, though, make sure you then call the dog to you and praise it when it comes.

### Creating a Den

If you need to confine your dog to stop it attacking wildlife, an effective way is to use a den.

#### How to make a den

1. Select or make a small room about 2 x 3 metres. A laundry, tool room or bathroom is often ideal.
2. Put a comfortable bed in the room for the dog to sleep on.
3. Put the dog's water bowl in that room and leave it there all the time, so that even if the dog is free in the garden it has to voluntarily go into the room to get a drink.
4. Whenever you give the dog food, feed it in the den.

At feeding time make a big fuss and elicit as much tail-wagging happiness in the dog as possible. Then command the dog to sit and stay for several seconds before allowing it to eat its food. Once the dog is eating, leave the den immediately and close the door behind you. Return in 15 minutes, release the dog and have a big enjoyable game with it.

When you've done this a few times, the dog will associate happiness with being locked in the den and also with being released from it. This will dispel anxiety and the dog will put up with longer periods of confinement.

Once your dog has accepted being confined in the den as part of life, you should be able to confine it without necessarily giving it food. Giving it a small food reward occasionally when you confine it, will remind it that being dened is a happy occasion. A big raw marrow bone works well for this purpose as it will keep the dog occupied for some hours.

Make sure that you give your dog extensive exercise on a daily basis to compensate for what it misses out on while dened

## **Cats & Wildlife**

Cats are the ultimate hunters and attacks on wildlife are sadly very common - but it's not very difficult to reduce attacks.

## **How To Reduce Attacks On Wildlife**

### **1. Keep your cat indoors at night**

Most cats spend more time hunting at night than during the day and as many native animals are more active at dusk, dawn and during the night, keeping your cat indoors from an hour before dusk to an hour after dawn will greatly reduce the number of attacks.

For cats which are not allowed to roam the house, consider making a single room into the cat's bedroom, eg. the bathroom or laundry, or construct a cattery outside.

### **2. Keep your cat indoors or confined all the time**

If your cat hunts frequently or if you live in an area with a lot of wildlife you may also like to think about keeping your cat confined all the time. Make a cattery in your garden or, better still, attached to your house, with a 'cat door' between the cattery and your house, open only when you're happy for the cat to be inside the house.

You could also enclose a verandah with netting for the cat or make a large 'window box' verandah for your cat on the outside of one window so the cat can look out but not get out.

Cats which are permanently housed indoors need climbing frames, scratching posts, litter trays and elevated 'shelf' beds so they can look down on life from a lofty height.

### **3. Put a small mirror on your cat's collar.**

This helps wildlife by reflecting light and warning animals of the cat's presence. This is particularly effective during the day, but will work at night in well-lit areas or when the moon is bright.

### **4. Put bells on your cat's collar**

This may not make a big difference to reduce the number of successful attacks your cat makes on wildlife, but they will let you know where your cat is when it is loose in the garden.

### **5. Discipline your cat**

Cats can be disciplined for attacking wildlife by hosing them or throwing water bombs at them when they are stalking wildlife. Don't hit them with your hand or a newspaper - it means nothing to a cat except that they will learn to avoid you - it won't stop them attacking wildlife.

### **6. Desex your cat**

Desexed cats roam less and are therefore less likely to attack wildlife.



## First Aid for wildlife

If the worst happens and your pet attacks a wild animal, retrieve the animal from your pet as quickly as you can. Hosing your dog or cat or throwing a blanket over it may make it easier to separate it from the animal.

- Be careful - injured animals will bite or claw you.
- Pick up injured animals with great caution.
- **REMEMBER - injured animals are in pain, scared and don't know you are trying to help.**
- Use gloves and a thick towel and handle them as little as possible.

- Place the animal in a dark box, put it in a quiet area, keep it warm and leave it alone (don't try to feed it). This is extremely important as many injured wild animals die of shock rather than from their injuries.
- Contact the Wildlife Ambulance on 3299 1032, National Parks and Wildlife Service on 3202 0200, or your local veterinarian.

For more information, contact Redland Shire Council on the following numbers:

**Animal Management** .....3829 8665  
Control of pets and other animals

**Nature Conservation** .....3829 8448  
Wildlife and Conservation related issues