

# Flying foxes in residential areas

## Introducing your batty neighbours

Flying foxes play a vital role in ecosystem health. Consuming fruit, nectar and blossoms, they travel up to 100 km in a night, pollinating native flowers and dispersing seeds of native trees.

A highly sociable and vocal animal, the activity heard from flying foxes at roost sites includes courting, parenting and establishing social hierarchy. Camp sizes can fluctuate from hundreds to thousands in response to local food availability.

## Flying foxes found in our area

### Black flying fox



Black flying foxes are found around the northern coast of Australia; their distribution has been expanding southward over the last 60 years.

### Little Red flying fox



Little Red flying foxes are an intermittent visitor to the Central Highlands region. It should be noted that impacts associated with the little red Flying Fox species are generally temporary and short lived.

### Grey-headed flying fox



Grey-headed flying foxes are listed as a vulnerable species under federal legislation (*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*). Grey-headed flying foxes show a high level of fidelity to roosting sites, returning year after year.

## Is it safe to live near flying foxes?

There is no reason to be alarmed if flying foxes set up camp nearby. Issues related to smell, noise, mess and damage to vegetation can be quickly addressed or if necessary, handled with the assistance of Council.

Here are some tips for living near flying foxes:

- Park cars under shelter where ever possible.
- Don't leave washing out at night. Pull it in before the sunset when bats begin foraging.
- Install netting around fruit trees (or put bags around fruit). It is preferable to use white thick-knitted netting pulled tight rather than black netting to reduce the risk of wildlife becoming entangled.
- Avoid the use of barbed wire fences near flowering plants so that flying foxes don't become ensnared.
- Vegetation pruning or removal in high risk areas may be an option, with the required permits.

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## Can I disperse flying foxes from my property?

Flying foxes and their habitat are protected in Queensland. It is illegal to attempt to disperse flying fox camps without approval from an appropriate authority.

Residents should be aware that activities which result in the purposeful disturbance of flying fox camps can result in prosecution under the Nature Conservation Act 1992. This may include activities such as whipper snipping or mowing under a camp if carried out deliberately or excessively and with the intention of driving the flying foxes away. Activities such as these must be undertaken in accordance with the *Code of Practice for Low Impact Activities Affecting Flying Fox Roosts*, available from the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection website.

Inappropriate dispersal methods have been known to result in a camp staying for longer periods than normal, formation of splinter colonies, increased levels of stress-related disease and erratic or unusual behaviour, increasing the potential of human-flying fox contact.

## Australian Bat Lyssavirus (ABLV)

Advice from Queensland Health is that the risk of becoming infected with ABLV is very low. Less than 1% of the flying fox population carry ABLV and it can only be transmitted by direct contact through a skin-penetrating bite or scratch.

Infection can be fatal if it remains undetected, however the disease in humans can easily be prevented by avoiding direct contact with bats. Pre and post-exposure vaccinations that will prevent the disease are available. You can't catch ABLV from living near a roost or a fly-out route, or from bat droppings.

## What should I do if I have been bitten or scratched by a flying fox?

Immediately wash the wound with soap and water for five minutes. Apply an antiseptic cream and seek medical attention as soon as possible from your doctor or the Queensland Health information line 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84). If bat saliva contacts the eyes, nose or mouth, the area should be flushed thoroughly with water. If the bat is dead, it can be taken to Queensland Health to be tested for ABLV.

## Avoid handling flying foxes

All bats should be viewed as potentially carrying ABLV. Please don't handle flying foxes, even if dead. If disposing of a dead flying fox, do not directly touch it. Use a shovel or tongs and place into two plastic bags with your general rubbish.

Report dead or injured flying foxes to any of the following:

- Department of Environment and Heritage Protection 1300 130 372
- Queensland Health (Central Queensland) 4920 6989
- Biosecurity Queensland 13 25 23
- RSPCA 1300 264 625
- WIRES 1300 094 737
- Central Highlands Regional Council 1300 242 686