
From: Kristie Newton - WIRES
Sent: Wednesday, 21 August 2019 1:09 PM
To: Portfolio Committee 7
Subject: Question on Notice- WIRES

Dear Committee members,

Please accept the below response from a question I took on notice during the Koala inquiry hearing last Friday, the 16th of August.

While we appreciate The Hon. Mark Pearson's idea of a government funded crisis intervention, food drops are not a viable solution due to Koalas highly specialised diet and foraging habits.

The number and diversity of food and habitat trees in Western NSW are in decline. Koala's require leaves sourced from their local environment as they contain the relevant gut flora (microbes) to allow digestion. Foliage from outside the area which would be suitable to supplement their diet is also in short supply due to habitat clearing and the effects of climate change.

There are no known substitutes for native vegetation in a koalas diet.

Please see below extract from the OEH Code of Practice for the Injured, Sick and Orphaned Koalas. This section in the COP provides some insights into the complexity of collection and storing leaf for koalas.

It is imperative that we not only maintain current Koala habitat but also enhance and expand native vegetation if we are to halt the decline of this iconic species.

8.1. Food and water

Objectives

To ensure that the koala has a feeding and watering regime that encourages rapid recovery, supports growth if it is a juvenile and assists with the maintenance of foraging behaviour necessary for survival in the wild.

8.1.1. Standards

8.1.1.1. Clean, fresh drinking water must be available at all times and changed daily, except in the case of dependent young (See Section 9.1.1.7).

8.1.1.2. Water containers must be designed and positioned so as to avoid spillage and contamination and must be appropriate for the size, age and mobility of the koala.

8.1.1.3. Fresh leaves must be available for the koala to eat at all times and replaced daily, except in the case of dependent young. Leaves may be harvested every few days and stored prior to use.

8.1.1.4. Stored leaves must not be accessible to pets, pests and wild animals and must be protected from contamination and nutritional and moisture loss (i.e. stored in containers of fresh water for a maximum of three days).

8.1.1.5. Leaves from at least two different eucalyptus species must be offered to the koala each day. At least one of these species must be a preferred eucalyptus species sourced from the area in which the koala was found.

8.1.1.6. Branches must be placed in holders that contain clean water. The water must be emptied and re-filled as necessary to keep the leaf hydrated.

9.1.1.7. A hand-reared koala must be fed a milk formula that is appropriate for its stage of development.

8.1.2. Guidelines

8.1.2.1. Leaves from non-eucalyptus food trees that are sourced from the area in which the koala was found should be offered as a supplement.

8.1.2.2. Milk supplements should be offered to an adult koala in the intensive and intermediate care stages.

8.1.2.3. Contaminant-free dirt and bark should be offered to a koala in the intermediate and pre-release stages.

8.1.2.4. The choice of eucalyptus species offered to a koala should be varied every few days.

8.1.2.5. Leaves should be sprayed with water before being offered to a koala.

8.1.2.6. Both young and mature leaves should be offered to a koala.

8.1.2.7. Leaves should not be collected from the side of a major road as they are likely to be contaminated.

8.1.2.8. Leaves should not be dragged across the ground as they may become contaminated.

8.1.2.9. If multiple koalas are kept within the same enclosure, branches should be placed in different locations so that all koalas can feed simultaneously.

Kind Regards,
Kristie Newton
Campaigns Manager



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WIRE | NSW Wildlife Information Rescue & Education Service Inc.



WIRE acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this land and recognises their connection to native wildlife. We pay respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

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