

Flying-fox Factsheet



FLYING-FOXES

What are flying-foxes?

Flying-foxes, commonly known as 'fruit bats' are the largest flying mammals in Australia. These bats are mostly located across the southern hemisphere, with at least 60 individual species known. Unlike the smaller insectivorous microbats, these bats navigate using their eyesight and smell, as opposed to echolocation. Flying-foxes congregate in large colonies comprised of individuals and family groups called 'roosts'. The size of roosts can range from several individuals to hundreds of thousands. Their excellent vision and keen sense of smell helps them navigate up to 50km from a roost to search for food and hundreds of kilometres over several nights by moving between roosts.

Flying-foxes forage on over 100 species of native plants and supplement this diet with introduced plants found in gardens, orchards, and urban areas. At night they pollinate the flowers of native trees, including eucalypts and create new forests by dispersing seeds from the fruit they eat. They are like nocturnal bees. Without flying-foxes entire ecosystems could collapse. Flying-fox populations are in decline, largely due to habitat loss, resulting in the Grey-headed flying-fox being listed as vulnerable by the Commonwealth government.

Under the *Nature Conversation Act 1992*, all flying-foxes and their roosts are protected. Compliance with State Codes of Practice is required for any management actions near flying-fox roosts.

What are their habits and why are they here?

Across the Lockyer Valley Region, three (3) flying-fox species (grey-headed flying-foxes, black flying-foxes, and little red flying-foxes) are known to occur. Flying-foxes are social animals that camp in communal roosts during the day. These roosts provide resting places and are important for social interaction, mating and rearing of young. Roosts can be occupied permanently, seasonally, or temporarily and the number of occupants often varies throughout the year.

Habitat loss as well as lack of food and shelter has pushed flying-foxes to roost and forage in urban areas. As a result, human-flying-fox interactions have increased along with the misconception that flying-foxes are growing in numbers.

Flying-foxes and humans

Conflict between humans and flying-foxes mainly occurs when a roost is in the vicinity of residential areas. Typically flying-foxes prefer roosting in trees near creeks with thick understorey of shrubs and grasses. People living near flying-fox roosts may be affected by noise, odour, and droppings. Flying-foxes use sound to communicate, mainly during dawn and dusk when they are arriving or departing their roost, during the mating season, or in response to a disturbance. The main odour associated with flying-foxes is the scent male flying-foxes use to mark their territory and to attract females during the mating season.

Tips for living near flying-foxes

- Bring your washing in at night.
- Park your car under shelter.
- Cover fruit trees with sturdy white wildlife friendly nets.
- Plant roost trees away from houses, this can reduce the noise from a flying-fox roost to an acceptable background level.
- Be prepared – plan ahead! Mulch, mow and weed under and around trees before flying-fox season.
- Trimming trees (but not removing entire trees) within your property before flying-foxes are present will help to make trees near your home, washing line, outdoor areas, cars and water tanks less desirable for roosting.
- Guidance from the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments on the types of activities which may be undertaken, as well as appropriate timing and methods for these activities can be found at www.environment.des.qld.gov.au. Please ensure you follow these guidelines when undertaking any activities on your property.

For more information on living near flying-foxes please visit - [Queensland Government | Environment | Living-near-flying-foxes](#)

Do flying-foxes carry diseases?

Like most wildlife and pets, flying-foxes may carry diseases that can affect humans and other animals. **Australian Bat Lyssavirus (ABLV)** can be transmitted directly from flying-foxes to humans and/or other animals. The risk of contracting Lyssavirus is extremely low, with transmission only possible through direct contact of saliva from an infected animal, with a skin penetrating bite or scratch to humans and/or other animals.

Flying-foxes are natural hosts of **Hendra Virus**. It is believed that the virus is transmitted from flying-foxes to horses through infected flying-fox fluids and excretions. Vaccination is the most effective way of reducing the risk of the virus infecting horses. As a precautionary measure, horse owners should not feed or water horses beneath trees where flying-foxes roost or visit regularly.

If you become aware of the presence of Hendra Virus in any species of animal, you must report it to **Biosecurity Queensland** or contact the **Emergency Disease Hotline**.



Scan the QR code to save the Lockyer Valley Koala and Wildlife Rescue contact details on to your mobile phone for easy and instant access.

FLYING FOX CONTACT DETAILS

Bat Conservation and Rescue - QLD (BCRQ)
0488 228 134 (24 HOUR HOTLINE)

RSPCA – Wildlife Emergencies
1300 264 625 (1300 ANIMAL)

Lockyer Valley Regional Council
Call Centre - 1300 005 872

Queensland Government – Enquiries
13 74 68 (13 QGOV)

Recommended Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when dealing with injured, dead, or alive flying-foxes.

- ✓ Long Sleeve Shirt
- ✓ Enclosed Shoes
- ✓ Thick Gloves
- ✓ Strong / Thick Garbage Bag
- ✓ Full Length Pants
- ✓ Safety Glasses
- ✓ Shovel / Tongs
- ✓ Box / Basket / Towel



What should I do if I find a sick, injured, or orphaned flying-fox?

- Do not touch the bat.
- Scan the QR Code, download the Lockyer Valley Koala and Wildlife Rescue contact details - they will provide further instruction as required.

What to do if bitten or scratched by a flying-fox?

- Prompt treatment following a bite or scratch is vital.
- Contact your local hospital immediately – they will arrange the appropriate vaccination required to protect you against ABLV.
- Wash the wound gently with soap and water for at least five minutes. Apply an antiseptic (e.g., iodine, or ethanol alcohol) and cover the wound.
- Do not dispose of the bat, if possible, have the bat tested for ABLV. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and/or Queensland Health will assist with the collection and testing of the bat.
- If bat saliva gets into your eyes, nose, mouth, or into an open wound, flush thoroughly and seek medical advice immediately.

What should I do if I find a dead flying-fox?

- Wear and use the recommended PPE.
- Use a shovel or tongs to put the dead bat into a strong garbage bag, carefully tying it off.
- Carefully place into another garbage bag, tie it off and place in your red wheelie bin or take to the Gatton Transfer Station at Fords Road, Gatton 4343. The transfer station accepts dead animals between **8am-3pm, Monday to Friday only**.
- Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water, change and wash your clothing.

What do I do if my pet has caught a flying-fox?

- Wearing and using the recommended PPE, safely remove the bat from your pet.

IF ALIVE - place a towel/washing basket or box over the bat and call your local wildlife care. Take your pet to a veterinarian clinic and inform them of the situation.

IF DEAD - put the bat in a garbage bag, tie it off and then place into another garbage bag and tie it off. Take the bat along with your pet to a veterinarian clinic and inform them of the situation. The veterinarian will action from there, testing the dead bat for any diseases (if required) to appropriately treat your pet.

FLYING-FOX MANAGEMENT PLAN SUMMARY

Council understands the community can sometimes experience negative impacts from flying-fox roosts and have adopted a [Management of Flying-fox Roosts Policy](#) and [Regional Flying-fox Management Plan](#). These two documents aim to balance the impacts of flying-fox roosts on public health, amenity, and critical infrastructure with conservation considerations in a long-term, holistic, and balanced way.

What are Council's Roles and Responsibilities regarding Flying-foxes?

Responsibility to manage flying-foxes (where sought to be undertaken) lies with the owner of land on which a flying-fox roost is located. Council is not responsible for the management of flying-foxes on land that is not managed by the Council (e.g., private or State controlled lands).

Council may contribute to joint management activities when human-flying-fox conflicts arise, and the flying-fox roost is located, on both private and Council land. The contributions and extent, in these circumstances are at the discretion of Council and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Where a clearly unacceptable impact to public health, amenity or environmental values can be demonstrated, roost management actions on Council managed land may be undertaken in a staged approach, with low impact, lower cost works undertaken in the first instance.

Council's position is to establish buffers (to a distance of 35m where necessary) between sensitive receptors (such as houses, schools and other community areas) and flying-fox roosts to minimise impacts to residents, while balancing amenity, public health and conservation considerations.

Council does not support dispersal of flying-fox roosts due to the extreme level of uncertainty in management outcomes, high cost to ratepayers, risk of exacerbating impacts to communities and severe health risks to the flying-foxes themselves.

Council Officers are available to discuss local flying-fox roosts and options to mitigate potential impacts with you. If you are impacted by a flying-fox roost that is located on private property or State government land, speaking with that landowner is also recommended. Council Officers are available on **1300 005 872** or by email at: mailbox@lvrc.qld.gov.au

For more information on the [Management of Flying-Fox Roosts Policy](#) and [Regional Flying-fox Management Plan](#) visit Council's website: www.lockyervalley.qld.gov.au/wildlife

