

BULLETIN 25

The Wombat Forum

The Wombat Forum has been set up on the Society's website. This provides the members to talk to each other, ask questions, offer suggestions about what the Society could be doing or directions it could be heading, and share experiences. There is already a wealth of information been posted on the site and it would be great if other members would join the forum and share their insights and ideas.

Topics covered on the forum include:

The Wombat Cull discussed in the last Bulletin.

Disseminated Intravascular Coagulation

From Janine and Baron

This is a rare, life-threatening condition that prevents a wombats blood from clotting normally. In DIC the body's natural ability to regulate blood clotting does not function properly. This causes the blood's clotting cells (platelets) to clump together and clog small blood vessels throughout the body. This excessive clotting damages organs, destroys blood cells and depletes the supply of platelets and other clotting factors so that the blood is no longer able to clot normally.

It is caused by severe trauma (which Sally had on arrival 7 weeks earlier), some types of snakebite, burns, some cancers or the mother ingesting rat poison (who knows?).

It is also known as consumptive coagulopathy - a pathological process in the body where the blood starts to coagulate throughout the whole body. This depletes the body of its platelets and coagulation factors, resulting in the paradoxical situation in which there is a high risk for simultaneous catastrophic thrombosis as well as massive haemorrhage.

DIC is a very complex condition that can be hard to diagnose. A full blood count is important (especially the platelet count), bleeding time and fibrinogen levels. In Sally's case by the time she showed symptoms it was too late. Prior to her "bleed" the only abnormality was her weight was a little behind in gaining what she should but not drastic.

The prognosis for those with DIC, regardless of cause, is grim, leading the initials to be known colloquially as "death is coming"

From Howard Ralph

Disseminated Intravascular Coagulopathy) is certainly a nasty condition. It is also rare in most species and often follows an unknown cause which triggers the aberrant coagulation process. One would have to be able to measure fibrinogen and in particular 'fibrin degradation products'. These tests are not always readily available. Treatment is also difficult running a compromise course between clotting and bleeding. Even with human primates in the most high tech ICU the results of treatment are not encouraging. Poor little bloke.

Regards

Howard

The Wombat Crush

From Kim

A couple of people have suggested that wombats crush predators in the burrow but presume it is more surmised from remnants of animals found in burrows than observed or proven behaviour. I think Barbara Trigs may have made comment and I think Clive Marks may have as well. It is an interesting question. It would be interesting if anybody can offer evidence or a contact to find whether there is any actual sightings of some poor beastie being crushed. Wombats certainly will push against an intruder by raising their back plate to the burrow roof but the circumstances for them to get enough traction, a low enough burrow entrance and their nemesis in precisely the right position to be crushed leaves suggests not an easily accomplished feat.

Do wombats dream

From David

Last night the younger of our two babies started screeching like they do when they are distressed or warning off another wombat, but she was clearly asleep. The older baby snuggle up closer with her nose up against the others nose and everything quieten down. I have never seen any reference to this type of behaviour. Has anybody else seen similar behaviour?

Fat Wombats

From David

Just thinking after seeing one of our released wombats recently and how big she is getting.

Can a wombat get fat?

And if so how do you tell with a wombat?

We dont think this one is but she is getting to be a big girl!!!

Public Education

From Various

I was wondering if others have had experience giving talks to schools or public groups. We have taken a baby wombat to the local primary schools and talked about wombat behaviour and also to the local TAFE in one of their animal care courses.

We would be interested in hearing of other's experiences, particularly how you spread the word that you were available to do talks on wombats. Ours was simply word of mouth to friends.

We am aware that WIRES is against using animals in talks so has anybody met any opposition. We found it was the fact that we had the baby wombat that got the kids attention and really excited them about the wombat.

I would be interested in any experiences in other members educational experiences that could be included in the Societies Bulletin.

I have been present in a number of venues where orphaned native animals have been used to educate the general public ranging from preschoolers through to adults. I have always been impressed that the carers have always had the animal's best interests at heart- including refusing to show an animal that seemed stressed and ending the "show" when the animal no longer wanted to be out of his/her pouch. My experience has been that carers in general know what they are doing and ensure that animals aren't harmed by the experience. Strange that this cannot be done openly and properly with appropriate guidelines, yet anyone can get a license to kill one of these animals and if a wombat, it is fine for the crown to let them die of mange. We appear to have a very peculiar value system. Orphaned animals when certified well by a Vet or animal co-ordinator should be used to help raise awareness for their species. If their carer can't recognise when they've had enough or are becoming stressed, perhaps they shouldn't be caring for them.

Road Kill Seasonality

From Various

We are coming up to our Roadkill period. We live above 1000m in the Central Tablelands on a major tourist route. The tourist destination just down the road from us gets half a million visitors a year. We also have a major industrial town nearby that uses truck transport both in and out. We get at least 50 - 75 road kills a year between March-April to October. We think that this is mainly related to temperature. During summer wombats don't start roaming until the temp drops very late at night to very early in the morning. However during the winter they roam in the early evening when the temp is still warm and not freezing. This is when they meet the tourists and the trucks. The wombat occurrence appears mainly around forest transition to pasture. We very rarely see wombats in the open pasture areas or the thick forest. If we see them in the forest there is usually an open grassy area nearby.

Has anybody noticed seasonality to roadkill in their area and have any idea why it occurs?

Release Experiences

We are coming up to our next lot of releases. We live in wombat central!! We are concerned as to how many wombats we can continue to release in this area without creating a problem. We would be interested in other members' experiences and how they handled them?

Release Site Fun and Games

From Amanda

At our release site, orphaned wombats "do their own thing". Up to a certain age we supervise all their outings but there comes that time when they insist on more independence. Our most recent orphan is around 15 kilos and has decided her favourite times to be out and about are from 7pm to 1 am. At midnight the other night the unmistakable sounds of a wombat war came from a densely overgrown gully. The imagination is a wonderful thing and

seeing her being ripped to shreds by an angry territorial wombat sent her human scrambling through the bush soon locating the angry screaming wombat. A large brown wombat was sounding off at another unable to be seen due to the dense bush. It however heard the clumsy human, now trapped in a small clearing. The wombat had no trouble coming under the log the human climbed over to get away from it. Fortunately, the human had grabbed a thick stick, originally to throw towards the screaming but now used to prop against the wombat's shoulder, allowing it to stand still and the human to get back over the log and crawl on all fours up through the wombat tracks imagining any moment that those razor sharp teeth would be sinking in. The wombat followed for a while making threatening Hannibal Lecter noises.

Findings;

1. A human imagining a wombat chasing it moves fairly quickly on all fours in the dark.
2. A young wombat would escape faster than a human from any wombat attack.
3. Humans moving through wombat tunnels/ tracks in the bush do so slowly in comparison to a wombat.
4. Humans don't move well when their torch stops working.
5. When the wombat you worried about turns up at 1.00am as usual, happy and unscathed, it is not particularly sympathetic to you or your battered body.

Cydectin Treatment

From Amanda

The treatment regime for mange on free living wombats currently seen to work is Cydectin red cattle and deer pour on at the rate of 1ml per 10 kilos used weekly for at least 8 weeks. If the wombat is in care and can be sprayed, a solution of 1-10% oral ivermectin or permectin used as a topical spray assists itching and healing and if the animal is able to be handled, scabiol (used on humans) can be used on patches of mange and on pinkies (as well as on the humans who may well need it after handling wombats with mange).

Other topics include Introductions from Members, Mange, Ethics, Facilities and requests for information from the public. The more we can get visiting the sight the better we will be able to answer peoples inquiries and provide assistance to those in need.