

Northern Hairy Nosed Wombats on the Move

A pastoral property has been secured for a group of Northern Hairy Nosed wombats so they can move from Epping State National Park. During recent floods there was great concern for the 100 (*) or so remaining Northern Hairy Nosed wombats, the last of their species. The park was cut off by floods and floods of any greater magnitude or duration could have a catastrophic impact on this small group. The plan is to move around 12 animals to a new location in the hope they will set up a breeding colony. (*) The census is still underway, Andrew Dinwoodie (see previous bulletin)is hopeful that numbers have increased but a spokeswoman recently stated 100 in a press release). You can go to the Wombat Foundation via links on site, for more information and details how to support this group visit their site. Jackie French, one of our Honorary members is a Director for the Foundation and she reports that the census has shown an increase in their numbers .

Mange Map; This has a new address. To email mange reports use;

mangemap@wombatprotection.org.au

The mange map using Google Earth is up and operating and Shirley Lack from N.S.W. has taken over as the Map Co-ordinator. Some people will have so many entries they will be invited by Shirley to be a collaborator which means they can make entries and add details, but initially Shirley has offered to make all the entries. A separate email address has been set up to get reports to Shirley and this will link to the report form on site. Other reports can be sent through as they are now and we'll forward them to Shirley to enter. We are focusing on NSW entries this month and Victorian ones in the following then South Australia by end of June. The Wombat Awareness Organization in that State reported that 80% of the Southern Hairy Nosed wombats in the Murraylands population show signs of mange. Mange is not a distant quiet death. Each animals that dies from it suffers and recognising that each statistic is a wasted life is a useful thing brought home by the mange map. A photo gallery link to the mange maps icons is also being developed.



Barlo Smith examining wombat with mange. Brogo. N.S.W.
Mange map wombat 7

Mange Map Wombat 20



Email Received

Hi, My name is Cindy I thought you might like to see these photos of a wombat that was destroyed by people from the wildlife group. These photos were taken on Hazelwood Road in East Warburton, Victoria, 3799. I was camping there over night and saw the female wombat grazing in a paddock on Sunday the 3rd of May at about 10am and called the wildlife line. The person who came out said she had not seen mange this bad before. My 8yr old daughter saw this wombat and doesn't understand how our native animals are allowed to suffer like this.

> Thanks Cindy Molin.

Our reply; We don't understand why we allow our native animals to suffer like that either and members of our Society are working very hard to help wombats and stop mange. We've attached our latest news letter which talks about what some people are trying to do to help. Thank-you and your daughter for your compassion. Sadly we have seen our native animals as a resource, not the amazing creatures they are with a right to a healthy and happy life. We also "map" the reports of mange we get and work hard to try and get people doing more than euthanising them. Our society also welcomes people like you and your daughter to join, because there are many people disturbed by the suffering of wombats with mange and it is only through us all saying that is unacceptable, that change will come. There are also a great many wonderful things happening with wombats, people who spend years raising and rehabilitating them, people trying to develop sanctuaries and places where they will be safe. There is a long way to go and it may be your daughter's

generation who end up making the difference.

Thanks again to Phil Borchard we can show a wombat "self treating" with a pour on. Phil has been experimenting with gates for wombats and uses movement activated photography to record what happens.



Phil now has a new "toy" a movement activated movie camera and he has recorded footage of wombats moving through another type of gate he has been testing. Phil's work is of particular interest in that it develops a totally non invasive way of studying free living wombats. Phil is presenting his work on wombat gates to a field day organised through the Southern Rivers Catchment Authority at Termeil in N.S.W. On June 5th.

MANGE

The society is often asked to advise on treating orphaned wombats where mange is suspected or evident. There are many more options for treating orphaned animals than for free living wombats and some of the precautions when working with free living wombats don't apply or depend on the type and degree of mange. We try to put members in touch with one another to discuss what they have used, rather than recommend any particular treatment.

There is a brown scabby type of mange where hair loss is minimal and the scab is a brown colour. When wet the wombat scratches off the now loose scab and looks like a burns victim, the skin weeps and the animal dies from toxic shock and fluid loss very rapidly. This presentation suggests not wetting the wombat and instead using one of the spot on/ pour on or injectable mange treatments. Where the skin is intact there are a number of washes that have been used . Human scabies treatments containing benzyl benzoate, has been used on small wombats, pyrethrin washes and creams have been used, 6-10% sulphur in an oil carrier, and maldison wash all have been used. Anything topical will need to be reapplied until the full mite cycle is complete.



Washing this wombat caused large amounts of scab to become wet and scratched off immediately. The skin beneath weeped and the remaining scab wetted, began to smell. Bathed again she died.

CORRECTIONS

Bulletin 19. The treatment being used by the Wombat Awareness Organisation in South Australia is three, weekly injections of ivermectin followed by 5 daily injections of Trisoprim (antibiotic). The wombat mentioned as having malassezia fungi had this fungal infection BEFORE she was treated with ivermectin.

For free living wombats one option is to put one of the pour on products, like Cydectin or Ivomec pour ons into a device made from plywood and a tree guard frame (or length of fencing wire) and a bottle top cap. The plywood is joined to the tree guard by tie wire through two small holes drilled in the top.

These then can be put over burrows or hung over fences or places where the wombat moves through;



Over a burrow
In a pathway



Cut a piece of plywood (cardboard can be used but fails in wet weather)20cm X 30cm or smaller. Cut a hole starting 10cm from the 20cm base. The hole can be 5cm X 5cm. In the pictures the waste from the hole was used to make a roof and shelf . Use a bottle cap from a soft drink bottle or something that will hold 4ml (the biggest usual dose of pour on products suitable for wombats). The model uses a glue gun to stick the bottle cap to the hole. Using this method the shelf is not necessary as the bottle tops adhere to the ply. If using in wet weather consideration should be given to the "roof" which protects the product from rain. Drill holes for tie wire through 20cm top.

If you can get close to the wombat you can also use a needless syringe attached to two lengths of dowel or other stick, here fibre glass tent poles (which fold up and are flexible but only give 3mts reach) are being used. The syringe is filled and taped to one stick to which a series of hose offcuts are taped as a guide. The other stick is used by following the hose guides .



A range of products can be used. Dog products like Revolution, Advocate and Frontline Plus used at the dog application rate can be used .Many of these are spot ons. These work best when you make contact with the animal's skin. Pour on products as used for goats,sheep and cattle and deer may be better because they are made to be applied by pouring. Most adult wombats weigh between 30 and 40 kilos. Follow the dose rate on the package . As an example, "Cydectin" Cattle and Red Deer Pour on requires 1ml for each 10 kilo of wombat. For large, adult wombats, 4mls to cover 40 kilos is required. Speak to a Vet if you are unsure, most country Vets carry pour on products. When using any of these products check the version you buy, sometimes the same product (eg; Ivomec pour on) will appear in a number of formulations, for example at one dose rate strength for bigger animals like cattle and deer and a different formulation for sheep and goats. Make sure you get pour on not oral or injectable versions for these devices. All the pour on /spot on products work systemically and need contact eventually with skin. Wombats with severe crusting may not respond as well to treatment.

Some carers report better outcomes treating more frequently than conventional intervals and most report needing to treat more than once with any of these products.

These pictures show the making of a sulphur and oil delivery device which can be used on organic farms. More detailed instructions are available .



A carrier oil such as Neatsfoot or Canola has medical grade sulphur powder (10%) mixed in. The container is inverted over a burrow and small amounts of the product slurp onto the wombat as it moves past the entrance. Habituate the wombat to the empty container initially as wombats often pull down new objects as they investigate them, this should be used in Summer as there is some concern that being oiled may affect the wombat's thermoregulation causing it to be cold in Winter.

It is possible that a pyrethrin wash or powder could be employed in a similar manner and may be acceptable on organic farms. Caution in wetting wombats with certain types of mange needs to be considered and caution with winter treatment would apply to wetting the wombat. Wombats are reported to intensely dislike water being put on them but not have the same reaction to oil. Sulphur powder on its own has not been found to effective. Pyrethrin powder and washes have been used on hand reared wombats but no trial using powder on free living wombats reported.

MANGE RESEARCH

Hayley Schwartz from Victoria is looking into iron bonding molecules and their relationship to mange. She needs blood and mange samples from wombats with mange, including from those Wildlife groups euthanised or that may be found as road kill.

Project Outline

The roles of auto-antigens and iron-binding molecules in the pathogenesis of sarcoptic mange infected animals.

Sarcoptic mange is a highly contagious parasitic disease, caused by the mite *Sarcoptes scabiei*, which affects a range of mammals worldwide. Commonly affected animals include pigs, dogs, foxes, wombats and even humans. Despite apparently effective drugs and control programs, sarcoptic mange still causes problems in all but the most fastidious piggeries in agriculture. Mange causes losses due to weight loss and reduced reproductive rate even at relatively low infections rates. Effective control requires sensitive, specific diagnostics and long lasting drug or vaccination strategies. Mange has also been identified as the most significant infectious disease affecting the common wombat (*Vombatus ursinus*) and has the potential to cause dramatic population decline.

Recent work in our laboratory established that pigs develop a number of auto-antigens during mange infections and that those antigens described to date are iron-binding molecules. These auto-antigens are apparently specific to sarcoptic mange infections and occur at high prevalence in pigs suggesting a possible use in diagnostics assays. In addition, the suggestion that iron-binding proteins are important during these infections is novel and if confirmed may allow the development of new methods of control based on denying the mites iron through either immunisation or drug intervention. As a result, it is proposed that an analysis of the prevalence of these antigens be carried out in a larger scale to include wombats, foxes, dogs and humans. The antigenicity of other iron binding molecules will be investigated and then a search will be undertaken for iron-binding molecules in the mite itself. This search is by the Scabies EST Database currently being developed by colleagues at the Menzies School of Health Research in Darwin and the Queensland Institute of Medical Research. If such molecules are found they will be isolated and their functions characterised. It should also be possible to determine why the infected animal's own iron-binding molecules are recognised by the immune system as antigens. Have they been changed by the mite to make them auto-antigens or are inflammatory and pathogenic changes at the site of the infection causing this effect? This analysis might also determine whether the auto-antigenic reaction is in part responsible for the extensive inflammation and skin damage at the site. This project would elucidate the role of this auto-antigen reaction during scabies both for its possible diagnostic value and for its mechanism and importance during the infection process. The society has the collection protocol for these samples, just email research@wombatprotection and they can be sent to you. If you are

taking a blood sample ask your vet to take a little more (1ml) and we'll send them the protocol.

During the month the Native Animal Group in N.S.W. held a wombat day to discuss issues related to raising and releasing wombats. A variety of wombat people attended and there were many variations in practices. Some people raise from pinkies and release only these animals on their property others only release animals others have raised. Some are raised from pinkies, then go to a pre release "growing up" carer and then are later released. As a result ,what people observe and experience was found to be quite different. The best quote of the day goes to Jackie French's observation of wombats; **"Dirt is their Destiny"**.



The issue of inadequate facilities to treat adult wombats that are injured was raised and lively discussions about options like movable pre release pens, repopulating areas from where wombats have disappeared discussed. Jackie French undertook to do publicity regarding the need for safe release places for wombats and a protocol explaining what interested people might be letting themselves in for was developed. The issue of whether "safe" included places free from mange or at least places where wombats with this were treated was also discussed. The use of non invasive treatments for free living wombats with mange was canvassed as were preventative strategies. Notes from the day will be available and we'll let you know when and how to get them.

Missing out on such days and interactions is a real problem for people raising wombats. Distances are long and moments between feeds are short. The last newsletter indicated that the Society hopes to solve some of these issues by having on line forums able to be accessed by

members so the contact with one another does not need to go through the Society. A group has developed to look into options for forums on site, and if you have an opinion or have used a particular forum you feel works well, please contact. You are reminded that there isn't a "big wombat" making these decisions, its up to members to say what they would like and what would work for them. On that matter we thought we'd publish in full Suzanne and David Alder's letter. David is a new Board member and Suzanne has been offered up as a conscript to various interest groups too.

We have read the latest Bulletin (19) with interest. There were a number items that caught our attention. The Item on sanctuaries is one of special interest as we are trying to create a wombat sanctuary and hospital on our property. At the moment we are only set up to care for young wombats and very temporary fixtures for pre-release. We are currently trying to raise money through grants to build more permanent structures. We are intrigued by your pay it on scheme but we are unsure how you would see this working. We are working on the idea that it is important that the structures be functional but also they need to be visually acceptable so that we can use them for educational purposes as well. We do not wish to use the facility as a zoo but we do have people visiting the property and it would be unfortunate if we could not use the opportunity for education on wombats as well as whatever other reasons they are visiting. So if this is to be an ongoing project then we need to devise a way of having an ongoing income to support further expansion with other people and also to supply the funding to maintain the sanctuary.

We would be very interested in hearing your ideas on Sanctuaries Hospitals and cared for- communities.

This brings us to the next item in the Bulletin, education. The problem with the current workshops as far as we are concerned is the difficulty in getting to them and the cost in terms of travel and accommodation. We are also looking at trying to set up a wombat roadshow that we can use at local events and schools and also to use it to raise money as well as educate. Again cost is the big issue and we have some ideas on how that can be covered but it is the cost of setting the thing up in the first place that is holding us back. We have approached the NRMA to sponsor some aspects of this but we are still waiting for a response. We attended the Mangrove Mountain Workshop but were forced to leave early due to the distance away and work commitments the next day. We would very much like to attend the Braidwood workshop but we have still not worked out the logistics of being able to get there.

We are particularly interested in wombat release and cared for communities. The fact that Jackie French is talking there is a great incentive as far as we are concerned to attend the workshop due to the work she has done with wombats and we suspect operates in a very similar way to us. We are also interested in release experiences as we have a number of wild wombats in the surrounding area (ie we have something like 20 burrows within 100 m or so of the house) and this raises concerns for us about continued release of new wombats into the area. We are trying to have our property declared a Wildlife Refuge we find ourselves in the position of being encouraged by one government department while being blocked by another department. We are therefore very aware of the haphazard approach of government to wildlife protection. We have also been told by NPWS that we would not be issued a wildlife care license as long as there is an existing group covering our area. We have an existing group cover our area but we are a long way away from them and it is a hardship to try attend midweek meetings. It took two years of constant contact to be able to even attend an introductory course and I am not aware of any wombat courses having ever been run. Other trainers are not even

allowed to be named as a source of information in the group and I am not aware why this is.

Has anybody in NSW set up a wombat sanctuary what experiences difficulties have they encountered?

Is anybody currently releasing wombats into a well populated wombat inhabited area and what experiences have they had with the native population?

Finally we are very aware of the lack of information on wombats and how difficult it is to get the information. The only message boards that we are aware of are Ozark and Faunaoz. Neither group specialises in wombats and although we have posted requests for information we have found their responses tend to be very limited and brief. It is also very difficult to generate discussion, partly we suspect because there are only a few wombat people that subscribe. We also think that if one of the wombat "gurus" responds others may be put off offering comments for fear of appearing silly. We feel there is a lot of experience out there that is not being collated because there is no common forum for discussion. Has the WPSA ever considered running e-workshops/conferences for its members to share ideas? The one thing we found is that (a wombat workshop) was so packed with information that their was very little time for discussion. Also the experience level was extremely wide so the the presentation level had to be aimed at the lowest level where as we would liked to have had more in depth discussions.

Would other members like to see more discussion on wombat behaviour and care?

Questions we have raised for ourselves have included, Can you overfeed a pinky, Can pinkies catch things like colds from their carers, Are are pinkies talkative? etc

We look forward to any comments help that may be able to be offered.

Regards

David and Suzanne Alder

David and Suzanne's email highlights a number of shared concerns of members . It demonstrates how on line education and forums would be useful, particularly if all wombat information could be obtained from one site which then linked to or repeated information from other sites. One of the really big "time expenses" to do with running the society involves answering emails that could well be answered by many members and supporting people who are trying to find out information about a particular issue, again something that members could do.

People also need to be in contact with one another to raise the options and opportunities for wombats. One means by which we are doing this is to have individual members offer to become the Society's wombat contact for a certain area . A map that links directly from the get help for a wombat front page of the site has already been established and members who have offered to do this are being contacted and placed on this map. Information about what they can help with is also indicated. Once again, if you would like to be that person and haven't contacted recently about this, let us know.

Some wombat education developed by some groups is considered to be the intellectual property of that group and hence is not accessible

outside that group. Other concerns that limit the sharing of information about rearing and rehabilitating wombats is that some people fear providing detailed information about rearing wombats may encourage people to do this without getting support and thus lead to harm to wombats. Another problem is that to date most rehabilitation training has occurred within groups rather than between groups. This stops information sharing and often perpetuates incorrect information because only one type of training is available. We haven't seen any group in any state produce detailed training about working with adult wombats nor any appropriate guide to adequate enclosures for adult wombats.

National Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference www.nwrc.com.au

The Society's Presentation ;Wombats, National Icon ? Mange, International Disgrace will be presented at the conference on July 24th. The Society heard that an application to the World Society for the Protection of Animals www.wspa.org.au was successful and this will cover conference costs and the production of the post cards associated with this presentation.

Next month we will focus on Laws pertaining to wombats in the different States in Australia.

JOEY'S PAGES

We are cheating this month and giving you a link to a great video on ABCs' Creature Features Site.

<http://www.abc.net.au/creaturefeatures/wombats.htm>