

## Wombat Protection Society of Australia Bulletin 37

P.O. Box 6045 N.S.W. 2550 [info@wombatprotection.org.au](mailto:info@wombatprotection.org.au)

Welcome to Bulletin 37. It was great to hear from Bob Cleaver in South Australia, one of the Society's past Directors. He wrote after receiving Bulletin 36. "Just had to congratulate you on this issue of your Bulletin. An excellent read (and I don't mind admitting it had me in tears in places). Some really good stuff.

We have had a busy year this year too, for some unknown reason. Seems to be raining wombat joeys this year (not that I am complaining - luv 'em to bits). We have had not had an orphaned wombat joey now for two years, then within the last six weeks we have had five. Two have been passed on to another carer, one died (Salmonella), and the other two are still asleep.

The two that we passed on have gone to an excellent carer (know her personally) who works at Monarto Zoo (Murray Bridge SA). The Zoo want to set up a breeding program and have been looking for a trio of suitable animals for the purpose. The two we passed on were a male and female and both I believe excellent candidates. If another suitable female comes our way we will offer her to the Zoo to complete the trio.

Keep up the good work and please keep in touch.

Bob

[www.wombatrise.com](http://www.wombatrise.com)

### **National Conference Proceedings Available on Site**

Those of you who have ventured onto the Website will know that the National Wombat Conference 2011 papers/ presentations have been uploaded and are available to you as pdfs or on read on- site papers. A number of forums did not have preset paperwork, and some of the state employed presenters and academics needed final permissions- or we did- to have their papers so a few more will be uploaded as this occurs. We are very pleased to be able to offer that wealth of information to a wide audience so the benefits of the conference to wombats and their welfare can continue. The need to make sure information is being widely distributed amongst those who work with or care for wombats was made clear during the month as the Board, as part of its Education and Training mandate, begun to review existing information being published or sent out or used to train carers and wildlife officers. So much information is so patently incorrect that a major effort needs to be made to ensure that information being decimated about wombats is corrected, updated and used to assist wombats. The Conferences, which are now planned as biannual events, will go a long way to assisting in this endeavour. As the final presentations are received delegates who attended the Conference will receive a computer disk containing proceedings and non delegates will be able to purchase the same via the on site shop. For those who would like a full copy of the audio-visual recording of the Conference which includes all the opening speeches, the welcome to country and other sidebars not written up, these too will be available via the Shop.

### **Prejudicial Common Name**

*Vombatus Ursinus* which translates as "bear like" has been given a range of common use names. These include the forest wombat, the coarse haired wombat, the bare nosed wombat and the common wombat. At the conference the MC Ken Henry polled

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the delegates and while not unanimous, there was a consensus that the most frequently used name, common wombat, led to an impression that wombats are common, which they are not. In keeping with the common use name of the other species "hairy nosed" (Southern and Northern) it was agreed that "bare nosed" would be used by delegates in the attempt to change the perception of commonality. The Society has been using the bare nosed name for a few years now and were pleased when Barbara Triggs was able to have CSIRO accept the name change when the new edition of her book was released in 2010. It is interesting how matters sometimes resolve themselves. Jo McLellan, a ranger from Queensland who may be caring for the only group of bare nosed wombats found in Queensland, was interested in taking up the challenge to further cement this change. She writes;

"I've been trying to find out how I can officiate the use of 'bare-nosed wombat' instead of 'common'. Unfortunately this is the dilemma I am confronted with... (please read the emails below). Is there anything that you know of that might help our case, is there any papers or scientific reference that presents a formal justification, if not maybe this is something we need to consider developing???"

Your assistance would be appreciated..Cheers Jo

To: Wayne Martin  
Senior Conservation Officer, Environmental Information Systems  
Department of Environment and Resource Management  
6th Floor, 400 George Street, Brisbane, Queensland  
GPO Box 2454, Brisbane QLD 4002

Hi, I would love to discuss with somebody how our department goes about changing common names that are used in publications and other interpretive methods...It is now accepted in the 'wombat world' by organisations like CSIRO, Wombat Protection Society, universities, etc...that the common wombat be referred too as the bare nosed wombat. Unfortunately I can't use this common name on brochures and signage until it has been changed on Wildnet! I would like to see this happen, so that we remain consistent with what other organisations are using...

I can be contacted if somebody would like to discuss this further...

Cheers

Jolene McLellan  
GIRRAWEE NATIONAL PARK

From: Martin Wayne  
Sent: Thursday, 26 May 2011 2:58 PM  
To: McLellan Jolene  
Subject: RE: Common wombat versus bare nosed wombat  
Hi Jolene,

I understand the impetus to avoid the term 'common', given the species isn't common over much of its range.

However, there are some established standards regarding common names adopted by the Department which would need to be met. The common names used in WildNet are those applied in the standard texts as defined under the Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 2006 Part 1, Section 5;

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<http://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/LEGISLTN/CURRENT/N/NatureConWiR06.pdf#page=8>

Alternative names may be adopted where a subsequent scientific reference presents a formal justification. The common name for *Vombatus ursinus* in the standard text (Van Dyck & Stahan, 2008) is Common Wombat, so I'm afraid for us to change the name someone would need to publish a paper, recovery plan or the like. I hope that clarifies how common names are managed in WildNet.  
Cheers, Martin Wayne.

To Jo we replied we'd put this into the bulletin and get members involved. Then we received the following from Naomi Henry, another conference delegate and principal of the Wombat Foundation, the charity for the Northern Hairy Nosed Wombat;

With a bit of luck through The Wombat Foundation, I think I've managed to get the "Australian Faunal Directory" and the "Atlas of Living Australia" to change the name of the Common Wombat to the Bare nosed wombat. Hopefully it will take effect from their next update. As these are CSIRO and Dept Environment based, I hope it will now be changed permanently.  
Cheers Naomi

We can but hope that the next easily resolved issue will be the red tape and bureaucracy in NSW and Victoria holding up planned mange treatment programs (see special report further in this Bulletin). If the bureaucracy is enough to drive you to drink, we have good news for you.

The Society has its own Wine Label!!!

Members will remember that one of the Society's projects was to recognise "Wombat Friendly" farmers and products. To this end we are pleased to introduce, and encourage those of you who might give wine as a Christmas present, to consider purchasing through Goodwill Wines, a dozen or so of these beautifully labeled bottles, made by grapegrowers who don't harm wombats! The Society receives a \$20.00 donation through Goodwill Wines for each dozen sold.

<http://www.goodwillwine.com.au/charities/wombat-protection-society-of-australia>

From David Laiety, principal of Goodwill Wines in response to the Society receiving a donation referenced Goodwill wines- even before the label launch!

Hello,

I am looking forward to seeing how we go when we launch. It would seem that wombats have a legion of supporters even if some do not know about your organisation. I hope the wine goes a little way to sparking dinner conversations and broadening your supporter base.

The donor is one of my customers who had a case of wine go missing through Australia Post. This was the first time in almost two years that this has happened and so I sent her a replacement case. As one would expect, the first case turned up at the same time as the replacement and rather than have her return it, I suggested

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that she pass some bottles onto wine loving friends to spread the word about her chosen organisation, Wildlife Victoria. As I was reluctant to take any money for the second case (to her credit she was quite insistent) she instead decided to make a small donation to the Wombat Protection Society of Australia. I think this was an amazing unprompted gesture and I am sure you will have an ongoing supporter in her as she enjoyed the wine she bought and clearly loves wombats. And that's the background to the donation. I will keep you posted as to how your wine is going.

Kind Regards David

Goodwill Wine

David Laity

[goodwillwine@bigpond.com](mailto:goodwillwine@bigpond.com)

(03) 9739 0390

[www.goodwillwine.com.au](http://www.goodwillwine.com.au)



The label describes the work of the Society and "no wombat harmed" to make it.

**Education**

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The Society is currently developing further education about wombats on a number of fronts. Firstly we ask members to peruse the listed manuals on the care and rehabilitation of wombats and let us know if they are aware of any others.

Breeding Common Wombats, Cameron Lane & Michele Barnes, Australian Wildlife Experience, Dreamworld, Australia

Common Diseases of Urban Wildlife MAMMALS, The Australian Registry of Wildlife Health

Husbandry Manual for the Common Wombat, Compiled by Michele Barnes Australian Wildlife Experience, Dreamworld

NARG WOMBAT WORKSHOP 17 MAY 2008 – NOTES

Australian native mammal care – Common Wombat, Sandra Stewart 2003

A Guide to Handrearing the Bare-nosed Wombat, Linda Sauvarin

HUSBANDRY MANUAL FOR THE Common Wombat *Vombatus ursinus*

Northern hairy-nosed wombat *Lasiorchinus krefftii* and Southern hairy-nosed wombat *Lasiorchinus latifrons* Donna Treby 2005

WIRES N.S.W. Manual

Care of Bared Nosed Wombats V2 and V3 Linda Dennis

Australian Mammals, Biology and Captive Management Stephen Jackson

Medicine of Australian Mammals, Larry Volgelnest, Rupert Woods

Secondly on the Education front, Dani Odinea is trying to develop resources for the children's section of our website. She wants some help and input on the plants wombats eat to develop a wombat friendly garden activity for children. Children's education is very important and we were pleased to hear from Judi Ewings of the Northern Hairy Nosed Wombat Foundation of their plans to have education on all three species of wombat for children on their site and link with and access information from our site.

Back to Dani's garden idea; Wombat Food Plants and her request to members;

I'm writing to ask for your input to something I presented to the Wombat Protection Society AGM on the Saturday night of the National Wombat Conference in March.

I've put together wildlife habitat food plant lists for different areas over many years and I decided to put together a list of wombat food plants from Barbara Triggs second edition of *Wombats in the Australian Natural History Series*.

I'm hoping the list might be useful in a number of ways:

- To encourage schools in wombat areas to grow a Wombat Food Garden - to help the kids and then their parents to identify the often undistinguished-looking plants which make up wombat food. This may help landowners to protect and hopefully restore patches of these native grasses and groundcovers and see them as important wombat (and other wildlife) habitat plants.
- To encourage wombat carers to identify and maybe grow these plants to help rehabilitate wombats and familiarise them with a range of their native food plants.

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- To encourage the growing of these plants in and around soft release enclosures.

I recently emailed Barbara (Triggs) and asked if she could let me know if she approved of me using her information, how she felt about the way I've presented it and my suggestions for how we could use it to increase awareness of wombat food plants and improve rehabilitated wombats' chances of recognising their wild food plants. This was her reply:

I think your idea is great! You are most welcome to use the info from my book. At present I can't think of any other food plants, although I am sure there are some. If I hear of any others I will let you know.

So now I'd like to ask the carers and other wombat folk for their input. I would really appreciate your comments and especially any other wombat food plants you have observed and would be willing for me to add to the list (with acknowledgement and any details you send me).

I will then collate your input and send it out to all the contributors for a final check before getting some layout help to make it more attractive and hopefully adding it to the WPS website and maybe getting some printed free for distribution at talks, etc.

Danie Ondinea  
danieo@pacific.net.au  
(02) 4268 0952

### **Wombat Food** 1st DRAFT

Adapted from information in Barbara Triggs 2009 Wombats (2nd ed) Australian Natural History Series, CSIRO Publishing, Victoria.

#### Bare-nosed Wombat Food

Native species	Common name	Comment
Austrodanthonia penicillata (prev. Danthonia penicillata)	Weeping or Slender Wallaby-grass	Observed in ACT/NSW- favoured in open country
Carex species	Sedges	Obs in Vic – eaten on coast
Carex appressa	Tall Sedge	Obs in ACT/NSW
Deyeuxia quadriseta	Reed Bent Grass	Obs in Vic
Distichlis distichophylla	Australian Salt Grass	Obs in SA
Gahnia radula	Thatch Saw Sedge	Long white bases are favoured
Hypolaena fastigiata	Tassel Rope-rush	Obs in SA
Juncus species	Rushes	Obs in Vic – eaten on coast
Lepidosperma	Wire Rapier-sedge	Obs in SA

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Native species	Common name	Comment
semiteres		
Lomandra species	Mat-rushes	Obs in Vic. Important food item including on coast & in snow
Lomandra longifolia	Spiny-headed Mat-rush	Obs in ACT/NSW
Microlaena stipoides	Weeping Meadow Grass	Obs in Vic
Poa species	Tussock Grasses	Obs in ACT/NSW & Vic – favoured in forests
Scirpus species	Club-rushes	Obs in Vic – eaten on coast
Spinifex sericeus (prev. S. hirsutus)	Beach Spinifex	Obs in Vic
Stipa species	Speargrasses	Obs in SA & Vic - favoured
Tetraria capillaris	Hair-sedge	Obs in SA
Tetrarrhena juncea	Wiry Rice Grass, Forest Wire Grass	Obs in Vic – new tips in spring
Themeda australis	Kangaroo Grass	Obs in ACT/NSW & Vic – favoured in open country

Introduced species	Common name	Comment
Ammophila arenaria*	Marram Grass	Obs in Vic
Avena sativa*	Wild Oats	Obs in ACT/NSW – a few wombats in pine plantations
Lolium perenne*	Perennial Rye-grass	Obs in SA
Paspalum dilatatum*	Paspalum	Obs in Vic – eaten on coast
Sporobolus africanus*	Parramatta Grass	Obs in Vic – eaten on coast

Other foods	Comment
Dry leaves and stalks	While eating grass
Strips of fibrous bark	More ripping than eating - possibly to keep teeth in trim
Low-growing and fallen twigs and branches	Gnawed – to keep teeth sharp and proper length
Burnt logs and sticks	Nibbled, and some charcoal crunched up and eaten
Some roots	Roots of various trees (eg. Stringybarks), mat-rush and Poa grasses are dug up and eaten. Small roots of grass and other plants uncovered and nibbled

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	during droughts and times when food is scarce
Moss	When soft and green on logs and when green and moist in damp grass
Fungi	After bush fires when little else available

#### Southern Hairy Nosed

Species name	Common name	Comment
Cyperus rotundus*	Nut Grass - introduced	Some will dig over large areas to uncover corms which form an important part of their diet, especially during droughts
Maireana sedifolia	Pearl Bluebush	In extreme droughts
Sclerolaena species	Bindyi	In extreme droughts
Stipa species	Speargrasses	Preferred
Stipa nitida		
Stipa eremophila		

#### Northern Hairy Nosed

Species name	Common name	Comment
Aristida species	Three-awned Grasses	35% of diet (Andrew Woolnough study)
Enneapogon species	Bottle-washer Grasses	28%
Cenchrus ciliaris*	Buffel Grass - introduced	27%
Fimbristylis dichotoma	A small sedge	4%

If you can assist Dani or have further information regarding native foods please contact.

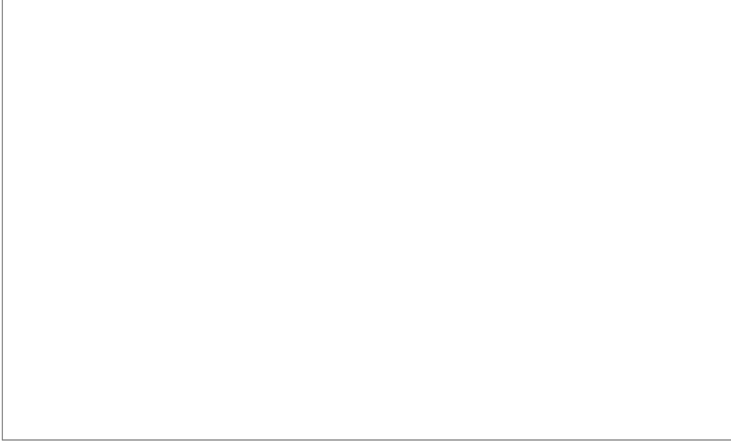
## MANGE- WE CONTINUE TO FAIL TO TREAT THIS PROBLEM

Letter from Australia: Country's wombats deserve a better fate

Marsupials suffering from mange brought by introduced foxes 'scratch themselves to death'

- Georgina Kenyon
- Guardian Weekly, Tuesday 30 August 2011 13.59 BST





*Under threat: a baby wombat, or joey, safe at Ballarat Wildlife Park in Victoria, Australia. Photograph: Newspix/Rex Features*

Australians earned one of their nicknames, "diggers", because of the ability of their soldiers to tunnel on the battlefield. Now another kind of Australian digger – wombats – are using their tunneling claws – with a horrible outcome.

The wombat we saw walked slowly towards his burrow on the banks of the Shoalhaven river in southern New South Wales. He looked at us over his shoulder, then decided he should return to his underground home for safety. The stocky marsupial was the size of a small capybara, about a metre long and almost as tall. One side of his coat was a beautiful soft grey. The other side was scratched away, bare skin almost showing through, raw and sore. This adult male was one of the many thousands of wombats throughout the country suffering from severe mange. "They literally scratch themselves to death," said Phil, known locally as the Wombat Man – a scientist who had brought me here to see the creatures on this crisp winter day, to show me how badly the poor creatures are suffering.

Their mange is a result of being bitten by mites, which are probably transmitted to wombats from their carriers, introduced foxes. Some conservationists say that mange is now so widespread that only very isolated populations of wombats will survive.

But nobody, excepting a few individuals and some small charities, seems to care. In fact, the Australian government allows them to be shot if a farmer says they are digging up the land.

The animals are fearsomely strong diggers – their muscular front legs and sharp claws can burrow many metres into the soil excavating winding tunnels for their subterranean homes.

Phil explained how conservationists are helping farmers install swinging gates in fences to ensure the wombats do not burrow under existing structures and cause much damage. It is at least heartening that some farmers are becoming more interested in the idea.

The beautiful Shoalhaven river was glass under the noonday sun. The heat had dulled the birdsong to quiet. Underfoot on the sandy bank we could see the indents made by the paws of kangaroos and wombats.

As I looked across the river, I hoped my country has the courage to improve how we treat our little diggers.

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Dr. Phil Borchard mentioned in this article presented on his work with wombats, specifically his work mitigating fence damage by wombats at the 2011 National Wombat Conference. Dr Borchard has adopted the use of bare nosed wombat for his published papers and he has recently published a paper with Eldridge .Their work concludes that wombats and their soil disturbance in the riparian zone benefit micro systems and plant growth. This paper is copyrighted so we'll provide more details next Bulletin.

Dr. Phil is willing to undertake research work, and is interested in researching mange treatments. The Society has approved donations for this purpose as a special project and is actively looking for sources for such work.

### **Mange Report Treatment From Jarake Sanctuary NSW**

Jarake Sanctuary at Nimmitabel NSW has observations about wombats with mange on three properties and in the surrounding areas over a twenty year period. The owners originally didn't know what they were seeing, and as is the case with many people who inherit the problem of wombats with mange on private land, they wanted to do something about it. The last two winters, the worst time for wombats with mange in the area, have been clear of manged wombats on the sanctuary for the first time in twenty years and they have recently finished treatment programs on the two surrounding properties. This geographic spread covers a large area including two valleys as well as a series of cleared farms, roadways and verges which allow for reasonably easy detection of wombats with mange. (unlike other densely forested areas which make seeing wombats difficult, a lot of the area in the treatment area is fairly flat open grassland and farmland). That isn't to suggest anything less than sheer determination to vanquish mange on their Sanctuary has resulted in such a successful outcome, rather to emphasise that were there still wombats with mange in the area, they would be seen as they are sought out and looked for. One of the three properties also has registered wildlife carers living on it so the results are also verifiable by other landowners.

The system used on the Sanctuary was to treat any wombat with mange using the weekly for two months, fortnightly thereafter until clinical signs abate and monthly there on where possible and to treat wombats using burrows nearby that used by a wombat with mange .All Wombats have been left in the wild and treated with Cydectin (red deer and cattle pour on) at 1ml per 10kg. Some wombats due to their behaviour were able to be treated by tipping the Cydectin on, others by the burrow flap- self application method.

Marie reports that prior to following this treatment regime, they had used various recommended dose rates of various other products with little success. They also believe that treating wombats nearby one with mange is helpful and believe that even if the one with mange does not survive, they will have relieved its suffering to some extent and reduced the number of mites available to spread. Marie feels that now there are no infested wombats on Jarake that the job is much easier and it is why they have been able to move out from the sanctuary and cover surrounding areas. Marie also feels that although the absolute outcome for a number of wombats tracked and monitored to develop a treatment data base is unknown the fact that for

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two consecutive years Jarake has no wombats with mange after twenty years of always having wombats with mange indicates that it did not continue to spread.

The Sanctuary has developed a mange cart- a golf cart with equipment specifically to drive out to treat wombats and Marie reflects on the process. "Years ago there were so many around the immediate area, we needn't have walked far. These days the mange buggy makes a big difference. Sometimes one of us had to wait for a couple of hours to catch up on a wombat we needed to treat, now we would have to walk for a couple of hours to find any with mange. The mange buggy gives us a bit of a chance to get out to those outside our cleared areas. "

Jarake was one of the sanctuaries visited when the Society began collating carers' experiences with mange treatment. Two of the Directors were shown around the property and the Wynans demonstrated treating two severely manged wombats quite easily, one by walking up behind it quietly and tipping on Cydectin from a long pole and the other ,which ran into a burrow, was easily treated on its way out by hanging a flap immediately and putting in the Cydectin. Neither wombat was distressed by either method and in both cases receipt of the dose was able to be confirmed.

The dedication and persistence to follow wombats and target ones with mange for treatment takes a great deal of time and knowledge about where the wombat is and when they are likely to leave the burrow and where they will be going. This makes this type of broad area treatment program quite remarkable and far more complex than the situation where a regular single wombat visits or uses a burrow allowing a flap to be used.

The experience at Jarake shows that wombats can be treated in the wild and mange successfully removed from an area. The sanctuary will remain a focal point to examine what happens over time as now most of the burrows have been marked and camera pods set up so they can be monitored. The outcomes from this longitudinal work will be invaluable.

Marie again reflecting on the program " there were times when I thought I was just wasting my time. We'd treat a wombat that would disappear or ones that were clearly recovering from mange were found dead through some other reason. We often get extreme weather conditions and found one we were sure was well on the way to recovery dead after snow and another after heavy rain. We tried always to get the before, during and after treatment photograph but that was surprisingly difficult. With Mr Millpost we only got a photograph part way through treatment, it just doesn't reflect the state he was in when we started, and others, we saw but couldn't get a photograph of at the end. We tended to make treating the animal the priority and photographing it a secondary thought .As we realised the treatment process was working we had so many wombats we were treating we began keeping a list of who or where they were so we have good data about when each treatment was given and whether we saw them fully recovered, found them dead or couldn't complete treatment because they had moved on. In some cases we easily tracked them down to a new burrow but these days with burrows GPS marked and a movement activated camera available, that type of follow up should be easier but

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now distance is the complicating factor and we realise there is a limit to how far we can travel and undertake good follow through. It seems that the follow and treat method is the best from the perspective of really knowing you have treated a particular wombat, and for us that has been reassuring to see that the treatment works. We have however had to use the flap method on a number of occasions and see that as quite valuable. The chance of many people having up to four people available to track and treat wombats regularly on a property is less likely than having someone be able to recharge flaps set up where wombats with mange are seen and known to be."

### **Mange Group Report**

When Georgina Canyon says "I hope(d) my country has the courage to improve how we treat our little diggers" ,she must be aware of the effort it takes to delve into the beurocratic nightmare it is to do something new or different to significantly affect native animal welfare. The Jarake Sanctuary owners, the Wynans , had to become members of a native animal rehabilitation group to legally do what they did in NSW ie;- treat wombats on their own property. The Society continues to receive letters and emails and phone calls from private property owners who are determined that they should have the right to help wombats on their properties and when explained that in NSW you have to join a wildlife rehabilitation group to do so, despite the fact that many groups don't know how to treat free living wombats, many property owners find this ludicrous. While they are willing to help a wombat on their property they don't want or intend to join a group to become part of the native animal rescue and rehabilitation scene. Many argue they have no interest in keeping and raising native animals, they do not have time to volunteer to these groups (most native animal rescue groups require members be available to roster on to take emergency phone calls and rescues, almost all require a number of days of training prior to licensing someone and none specialise in wombats) and in NSW you can only register with a local group. This means if they don't treat wombats with mange, you won't be supported even as a member or as a property owner to do so.

The Society has been trying to clarify the situation for private property owners in the various states, to allow them to treat for mange. It has become clear that treatment programs must involve private property owners, and other volunteers need to be able to be mobilised on public lands; to do this, large groups of volunteers are needed and a focused effort made. To this end the Board has been investigating how volunteers might be used and how private property owners can be involved while simultaneously providing information, support and mange kits to licensed rehabilitators to assist build up knowledge and competency within registered wildlife groups.

Pour on Cydectin has now been widely used for some years to combat mange, by individual wildlife carers and sanctuaries with good results. However, to adequately combat mange in wombats a much broader base of action is necessary to make impact, long term and across large areas. This means that the general public needs to be able to be involved in treatment programs. Two years ago the Society began looking into how large numbers of people could be involved in large area treatment programs. This is going to be necessary to begin to address the problem widely.

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While small areas, and individual wombats are easily dealt with, ( the mange group will publish outcomes for treated wombats next bulletin) , we continue to receive reports where large numbers of wombats are infested and are seen year in, year out, and where property owners report the numbers infested are increasing over the years. In other areas people report there once being wombats but that skin disease has killed them all off.

NSW alone has proven to be a bureaucratic nightmare. The two areas, the registration of products for use on native animals and licenses to help native animals are both involved when trying to assist a specific species with a major health issue. Cydectin was owned by a company called Fort Dodge which donated product to the Society for use in its free mange treatment kits and had done so for many years. When taken over by Virbac, Virbac requested some type of regulatory authority prior to donating. So in 2009 The Society investigated with the APVMA (Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority the possibility of registering Cydectin for use on wombats so that a broader public could be involved and so that the new owners of Cydectin would be able to donate. As this also involved the issue of needing volunteers licensed to undertake this work and needing to allow property owners to legally treat their wombats, various wildlife authorities were also contacted. As the Society is National we initiated correspondence with APVMA, the EPA (Environmental Protection Authority) and the Department of Primary Industries (DPI).

After many, many meetings, correspondence and phone conversations, we seem to have moved further with the product licensing authorities than with the system for care and rehabilitation of native animals, which now appears to be the bigger problem. We have at least achieved confirmation from NSW DPI that they would not prosecute anyone using Cydectin on a wombat even though it is an off label use of the product.

In NSW wildlife groups registered to help native wildlife have fewer than 5000 members state wide and of those fewer than 100 deal regularly with wombats, and of those fewer than 10 specialise in treating free living wombats for mange.

Mange is so widespread and the amount of effort required to work as Jarake Sanctuary has to eradicate it within an area so time consuming that it is clear there is no way using the licensed carer system that mange can be addressed. There are simply not the numbers there to start.

Three of our Directors met with both the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service rehabilitation licensing officer Ron Haerring and with the Scientific Licensing Officer, Brendan Neilly. In addition, the Board wrote to and the public officer was asked to present to the NSW Wildlife Council on which sits a representative from each registered wildlife group in the state.

Ron Haerring reports that it is NPWS policy to only register existing groups which are based geographically so licensing a group to specifically treat wombats for mange doesn't fit within their policy. Although species specific groups have been registered in NSW they too are restricted by a geographic area and hold memorandums of

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understanding with nearby groups to manage their species, and this basically only applies to the Koala Foundation.

Scientific licensing is possible and can involve a range of people who may or may not be wildlife rehabilitators but is restricted to a particular property and limited to a license to conduct an experiment rather than a treatment program. While, in the long run some further work in this area will be helpful, it doesn't address the immediate problems or allow for existing solutions for a wide range of property owners wanting to treat wombats, but it may be helpful to some groups wanting to register to do this.

A recent report from a Landcare group who undertook treatment of wombats on a property at St Albans NSW suggests that Landcare groups may be a source of volunteer labour for mange treatment programs and may be able to organise themselves to work with a university or researcher in NSW for this purpose. The Emirates Resort in Lithgow NSW is an example of where a scientific license is being used to conduct a treatment program. The resort contacted the Society in 2010 to find out about treatments for wombats seen around the resort with mange. After discussing the flap method the resort contacted Jack Wolfenden, a researcher from the University of Western Sydney, who was available and interested in undertaking research. Jack will be comparing treating wombats with mange to monitoring another group not treated under a scientific license thus allowing treatment to occur. This is a rather tangential means for people to gain permission to treat wombats on their property and a researcher is certainly not available for each property owner.

The Society then went to the NSW National Wildlife Council, a body set up for all the licensed groups in NSW to have representation and discussion with NPWS on wildlife matters. This group, which represents registered carers, does not want private people- ie; those not belonging to wildlife groups to be able to treat wombats. The suggestions of the council included landowners being able to have associate membership with these groups as a possible solution. Many representatives on the Council are not involved with wombats at all -either because there are none in their region or because they belong to associations, like Seabird Rescue, Dolphin Sanctuaries etc. The Society further investigated which groups had associate memberships which would allow, for example, a private property owner to "legally" treat a wombat for mange. None have.

The Society has now received responses from the EPA, DPI and APVMA and the NSW DPI and well having held meetings with NSW NPWS and NSW Wildlife Rehabilitation Council. Members wishing to review these responses can use the forum on site or request the same from the Society.

At this stage it may not be possible for a private property owner in NSW to legally treat a wombat with mange under current arrangements and the Society may have to represent private property owners at other than the existing native animal welfare forums to deal with this matter. None are offering any means by which concerned landowners/ property managers can be licensed.

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This is not because of them using Cydectin, but because the policies of the wildlife rehabilitation groups in NSW and their licensing body, NPWS, excluding private landowners and other volunteers from assisting native animals unless they join a wildlife group, (none of which has an established mange treatment program). We say "may" because we continue to examine this issue and will approach the Veterinary licensing authorities as veterinarians are able to authorise not only off label use of products but also treatment of native animals under certain circumstances. It may be possible to assess and treat wombats under a veterinary license.

The small numbers and inexperience of carers in dealing with free living wombats explains why in NSW most groups recommend or carry out euthanasia rather than treatment. It is also interesting that local rangers employed by NPWS are frequently interested in having a mange treatment program set up for them and while they are able to issue a license to harm (ie licenses to shoot wombats) to private property owners complaining of financial damage caused by wombats, they are not able to issue a license to a property owner wanting to not harm but treat a wombat. This sort of licensing goes through the rehabilitation licensing. The most distressing comment made throughout this process was the rather surprised reaction from the NSW licensing officer that there WERE property owners wanting to treat wombats for mange. The system itself works against treatment programs; it fails to monitor or assess numbers of wombats anywhere, it fails to monitor health issues like mange, it fails to train the few rehabilitators licensed and available in treating free living wombats, it fails to act proactively and cannot cope with treatment in situ as it was developed around taking injured wildlife into care.

After the NSW experience over the last two years, it was not surprising when Maryknoll Sanctuary in Victoria, having organised funding to conduct a treatment program via a Landcare grant, ran up against problems with the Victoria Department of Sustainability and Environment. This we remind readers is the only State that does not reply to the "State of the Wombat" research the Society has been undertaking regularly and the State which allows wombats to be killed without permit in 193 parishes. Maryknoll's plan is to treat wombats on three properties, all known to have wombats with mange, using Cydectin, with the flap method of application.

The licensing system in Victoria is somewhat different from the NSW geographically based system of groups. In Victoria, an individual is trained, often by working with a sanctuary, and then they themselves can become licensed, so individuals rather than groups can hold the license to care and rehabilitate. When Maryknoll explained what they were proposing they were told that while they could go to these properties and remove as many manged wombat as they wanted, take them home and care for them, but they could not treat wombats on the properties under the terms of their license despite property owners wanting this. When they pointed out that wombats with mange die in captivity and there were so many mange affected wombats that not even every sanctuary in Victoria to take one could they care for those affected, they were told they were allowed to authorise the property owner to kill the wombats or they themselves could do so.

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This level of ignorance in government departments is quite distressing (and is due to these departments not being aware of positive outcomes and appropriate ways of treating for mange in wombats) and not being aware of existing published research. Unfortunately those who recommend euthanasia do not realise that their shooter generally leaves the euthanised wombat where it lies, or that wombats are highly social animals and will investigate their comrade, thus spreading the mites. No group or government department has a policy of properly dealing with wombat bodies so this method of doing "something for mange" (allowing them to be shot) probably aggravates the spread. Wombats dying in burrows that have mange create the other conduit for the spread.

The property where Lee Skerrat did his research in Victoria has reported that mange has spread throughout the population, they apparently believe that in the past when wombats with mange were removed, there were fewer with mange. This would appear self evident, but also indicates that a property about which mange incidences are known – see Lee's work, has reported by doing nothing, the problem increases. One of the three properties the Maryknoll group wanted to include in this work includes this property .

The point of treatment programs are to not only relieve the suffering of individual animals infested with mange, but also to over time, remove or control the incidence of mange in the population. The proposed method to be used by the Maryknoll project is the flap method of delivering Cydectin to wombats and they planned to use movement activated photography to assess and monitor treatment efficacy.

The Society's position is that it is accepted that there should be discussion and more results detailed from this method. It is not the product or the application that is now needing fine tuning but other issues highlighted in the Jarake Sanctuary work- issues like how to continually find a particular wombat, how far a perimeter of treatment is needed, how to weight flaps so they don't blow in wind, how to set flaps so



*Illustration 1: Foxes and wombats are often forced to share territory and burrows- picture thanks to Joanne Hagan NSW*

accidental collateral use of Cydectin is best managed and longitudinal studies to assess once wombats in a particular area are clear of mange, how long before reinfestation occurs and what are the actual vectors. There are reports of increased incidences of mange in wombats following fox and rabbit baiting. Both foxes and rabbits are known to carry the mite and both types of animal are quite likely to die in ,and their bones have been found dug up near, wombat burrows. If people are finding any bones dug out of burrows they can either photograph these (please incorporate a ruler in your photograph) or they can be sent to



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the Society for identification. Please soak the bones in a 20% bleach solution prior to sending to remove any parasites.

### **Better News For Coccidia Treatment For Wombats**

Dr Franciscus Scheelings, veterinarian at Healesville Sanctuary is currently undertaking research on Coccidia in wombats. He is conducting a trial with healthy wombats that are eating grass.

Dr Scheelings requires around 15 wombats for his trial. In particular he is looking for carers/shelters that can treat and collect faecal samples from healthy wombats in care. The treatment does not hurt the wombats and his research will no doubt aid future treatment programs. He would appreciate any help we can give him to help further his research.

#### New Treatments for Wombats with Coccidia

When treating wildlife with medication, the drug dose, likely effects and dosing interval often have not been figured out in advance. Take coccidia in wombats as an example. We have a dose for Baycox (Toltrazuril is the active ingredient) that is published in text books at 25mg/kg by mouth, once daily for three days. It has been used in many southern hairy-nosed wombats and common wombats at the Australian Wildlife Health Centre. It usually works - but not always. But is it the best thing and, if it does not work, what can you do?

There is a newer drug available overseas called Ponazuril. This drug is similar to Toltrazuril but in some species it is more "bioavailable" hence may work better. To figure this out we have started running a "Double blind trial". In this trial we collect faeces from wombats to see that they have coccidia. We then put them into groups to receive treatment with either Toltrazuril or Ponazuril. They then get treated with two doses one week apart. Three days after the second treatment, another faecal sample will be checked to look for coccidia.

If you want to be involved and share in the results please email Dr Franciscus Scheelings at [fscheelings@zoo.org.au](mailto:fscheelings@zoo.org.au) as we need more animals in the trial.

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

----- Original Message -----

From: <[askascientist@hhmi.org](mailto:askascientist@hhmi.org)>

Message Subject: Wombat scat

Message: I coordinate an educational forum for the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, see <http://www.hhmi.org/askascientist/>

I have a question from a high school student about how the wombat produces cuboid scat. I find plenty of discussion about the value of scat that does not roll, but nothing on the anatomy and physiology of wombats that would explain this shape of scat. I am hoping that you might have some inkling of an answer. I would, of course, give appropriate credit. We select some questions for publication at our website and I would seek your approval ahead of any web posting. Sincerely, Katherine Wood, Ph.D. HHMI ASK a Scientist Coordinator.

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Hello there, The wombat as a very long and narrow gut and is a hind gut fermenter. It generally eats only once very 24 hours for approximately 6 hours with some rest breaks during grazing. Hence nicely digested material arrives at the cloacca ready for dispatch. The wombat sits in the one spot and squashes each segment against the next, the combination of the long hind gut and the placement action makes at least two surfaces of the segmented scat flat. Wombats learn to make little piles of their scats as scent markers, baby wombats ( joeys, including when at heel with their mother) hide off the trail to do their scats where mum and dad will happily find the highest spot, a log, a rock in the open to do theirs. When things change in the bush or a road is resurfaced the local wombat spends nights remarking all the new rocks etc. Where a burrow sees a fair bit of activity, a toileting area will be present and used by both mum and joey and passers by. When handraising wombats they are easy to train to use a tray.....or a cupboard for toileting and will always return there.

### CAN WOMBATS CLIMB ?



According to most people, we wombats don't climb. We have short legs, a low centre of gravity a squat body and short front claws for digging not climbing. Our nearest relative, the Koala, climbs. Some people have remarked how similar I look to a Koala when I'm held upright. My nearest relative could also be described as having a short stout body, with a low centre of gravity when it is on the ground. Granted, its back leg are a little different and Koala front feet have

better claws, but really, when you think about it we are quite similar. I suspect there is no reason why I shouldn't be able to climb. It is perhaps more a matter of effort.

We wombats are good at effort, sustained, concentrated effort is our specialty. It takes huge perseverance to dig a burrow- you should try it.

I can see why those sharper claws of my cousin could be an advantage, as would be a tree rather than this metal bar.



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As I said there appears to be no reason against a wombat climbing so it is more a matter of my belief system or that of those who write about me.



As it appears there is no impediment to the possibility of me doing so I plan to continue to develop my skill and perhaps give those Koalas a run for their money.

Lets hope those folks working on helping my mates with mange take a leaf from my book.

*Millie is a NANA Wildlife Rescue wombat being raised by the Wynans of Nimmitabel NSW*

### **Volunteer Available Snowy Area Christmas Period**

From: Rosemary Edwards  
To: [info@wombatprotection.org.au](mailto:info@wombatprotection.org.au)  
ROSEMARY EDWARDS [rosieedwards@optus.net.com.au](mailto:rosieedwards@optus.net.com.au)

Members who may be able to use a days labour from Rosemary should contact her directly. She is hoping in future to donate longer periods of time in future. Rosemary is a nurse who has also lived on a farm ( in Brisbane so no wombats).

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**Do any members have a contact for Jason so we follow up on this query ?**

Message Subject: Two wombats in documentary

Message: Hi !

We've seen a documentary of Jason Markland (2007) on Wombats.

We've seen two little wombats you rescue.

How are they ? We hope they're fine!

Can give us news from them?

Thank you very much

Thank you for these cute animals

Sarah & Brigitte from France

### **Members may also like to respond to this study.**

#### **Can you help in our search for unique personal experiences?**

We're trying to find personal stories from people who have had experience keeping or caring for native animals either as 'pets' or for the intention of rehabilitation and release. The purpose is to explore issues about whether or not any of Australia's native mammals would be suitable as 'pets' for carers who wanted to bond with native rather than introduced species such as cats or dogs.

We know the environmental and health risks of keeping cats and dogs and we know that native mammals present far fewer risks in this regard. We also know that children today are losing interest in native mammals because the only animals they have personal experience with are introduced alien species. And we know that with 18 mammal species having gone extinct since Europeans arrived in Australia, current conservation strategies may be insufficient to stop others going down the same path. Establishing breeding facilities that would enable families to rediscover the value of native as opposed to just introduced mammals might help in the overall goal of conserving our biodiversity. But how well would captive-bred native mammals adapt to human companionship?

With increasing interest in this topic and the possibility of having breeding facilities established for select species, it would seem extraordinarily important to listen to those who actually have had real personal experiences in keeping native mammals rather than just rely on presumptions and rhetoric.

We are very interested in whatever stories, anecdotes or accounts you are able to share with us about the nature of the bond between you and your native mammals (or the bond that you observed between the animals and other people). Personal accounts written in the form of a few paragraphs or a page would be ideal. Or a phone interview can be organized if it is preferred.

As well as your personal account/s, there are some additional points we'd like to know more about. Answers for the following questions can be written in the form of short notes (or they can be answered in the interview):

1. What range of native mammals have you kept?
2. How did you come to care for them in the first place?
3. Where did you keep them (e.g., free in the house, in the yard, in a cage...) and how well did this work—or not work?
4. Who looked after them?
5. Were they ever sick as far as you knew?

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6. What were their personalities like? For example, did they play, show affection, seek your company, were they aggressive, did they bite or scratch etc.? —all the good as well as bad habits you noted
7. Did they bond to one person or did they relate to others as well?
8. What were some of the most memorable experiences you had with them—good or bad?
9. How long did you have them for? OR How long did they live? AND what, if you know, did they die from?

In addition, could you possibly comment on or help with the following questions?

10. Have you ever owned cats or dogs or any other 'conventional' pet animals? If so, how did the native mammal(s) you kept compare in terms of cleanliness, strength of bonding, personality, extent of companionship etc.?
11. Photographs would be very helpful additions to your account of your experiences—of the native companion doing anything or everything while they were with you. We would be very grateful if you could help us with this aspect of information gathering.
12. What is your opinion about the current state of legislation for native animal ownership in Australia?
13. Based on your experience, do you believe that any native mammals would or could make suitable pets?
14. Do you know any other people who keep or care for native mammals who might be interested in telling us their stories?

We recognise that some people would rather remain anonymous in terms of recounting their experiences, and that's fine if you would prefer us to keep your name out of the compilation. Of course, if you don't mind others knowing you have had these experiences, we'd be delighted to integrate your account under your name.

Hopefully, through your personal account of your experiences, you can help us develop an experience-based assessment of whether keeping native mammals as pets is at all feasible. We believe that personal experiences recounted in this way are just as important as theoretical considerations. Whatever you can do to help would be greatly appreciated. We welcome all points of view.

Written accounts of your experiences can be sent to [nathwilliamb@hotmail.com](mailto:nathwilliamb@hotmail.com) .

Sincerely,



Nathan Burke  
Research Student



Mike Archer  
Professor of Biological Science

End