



Fauna Rescue of South Australia Inc

Flying-fox Policy



FLYING-FOX POLICY

Introduction

This document covers the rules and procedures for the rescue, rehabilitation and release of orphaned, juvenile, sub-adult and adult flying-foxes.

Positions appointed and approved by Fauna Rescue of South Australia Inc are:

1. Flying-fox and Microbat Coordination Team (three Bat Team Members).
2. Weight recorder.

General

1. All flying-fox rescuers and rehabilitators must have completed a Lyssavirus Pre-Exposure vaccination program, undertake bi-annual titres and maintain booster vaccinations as deemed appropriate by the Health Department.
2. All vaccinations, titres and booster procedures are to be registered with the Flying-fox and Microbat Coordination Team (FMCT).
3. All flying-fox rescuers and rehabilitators must be financial, complimentary, or honorary members of Fauna Rescue of South Australia Inc (FRSA) and have completed all FMCT approved training courses.
4. All flying-foxes must be transported to a licensed FRSA carer on completion of rescue.
5. All calls to FRSA members to rescue flying-foxes must come through the FRSA Bat Rescue Hotline or member of the FMCT.
6. Any FRSA member not contacted by the FRSA Bat Rescue Hotline or member of the FMCT to rescue flying-foxes must call the FRSA Bat Rescue Hotline or member of the FMCT to register the call before proceeding.

NOTE: Points 5 & 6 are to ensure all FRSA members will be covered by insurance and all animals recorded.

7. Carers who hold dual membership with FRSA and any other wildlife or flying-fox organisation, will not be covered by FRSA insurance if the call to rescue flying-foxes has not been registered with the FRSA Bat Rescue Hotline or member of the FMCT.
8. All calls registered with the FRSA Bat Rescue Hotline or member of the FMCT cannot be transferred to another wildlife or flying-fox organisation without FMCT approval.
9. All carers who hold dual membership with FRSA and any other wildlife or flying-fox organisation, will not be eligible to rear or rehabilitate flying-foxes on behalf of FRSA.

10. Due to the specialised requirements of flying-foxes a member of the FMCT must be consulted before the animal is taken to a vet except in extreme circumstances where immediate and obvious euthanasia is required.
11. Flying-foxes can only be taken to a vet clinic that has vaccinated staff on duty. Rescuers and rehabilitators must notify the vet clinic prior to arrival to ensure a vaccinated vet is on duty.
12. All flying-fox carers holding a "Protected Animals Permit" must maintain a protected animals record book and a completed return must be submitted to the DEW Fauna Permit Unit by the 14th July each year.
13. FMCT will conduct monthly fly out counts at the colony and record the number present. Count results will be shared with DEW and Australian east coast researchers monitoring flying-fox populations.
14. Flying-fox team members may apply to the FRSA committee for reimbursement of petrol or parking costs associated with a flying-fox rescue or Heat Stress Event (HSE).
15. Flying-fox carers must maintain appropriate daily husbandry for all flying-foxes in their care.
16. Flying-foxes are not to be publicly displayed and must only be transported from their rehabilitation environment after consultation with a member of the FMCT.
17. Flying-fox team members are to be courteous, respectful and polite to all stakeholders involved in the ongoing support of Adelaide's flying-foxes and their colony as well as members of the public, DEW, Vets, Zoo and Botanic Gardens staff.
18. Flying-fox team members must not post defamatory comments or any information relating to Vet care on Facebook or other social media platforms including the closed Facebook group Fauna Rescue Flying-fox and Microbat Team page.
19. All flying-fox team members must abide by the flying-fox policies and protocols contained within the "Flying-fox Documents" and sign the agreement on page 15 and return to the FMCT member listed on the agreement.
20. Rescuers and rehabilitators who do not sign the agreement will not be eligible to rescue, rear or rehabilitate flying-foxes for FRSA.
21. Non-compliance with the "Flying-fox Documents Policies and Protocols" will be dealt with by a three-stage process:
 1. A verbal warning will be issued.
 2. A written warning will be issued and a documented investigation produced. At this time, any team member under investigation will be taken off call pending a resolution.
 3. Continued non-compliance will result in expulsion from the FRSA Bat Team.
 4. Any flying-fox rescuer/rehabilitator under investigation has the right of reply under the Laws of Natural Justice.

22. An Animal Record Form must be completed for all flying-foxes (dead or alive) via the FRSA website, within 5 days of rescue.
23. Data on all flying-foxes rescued (dead or alive) must also be submitted to a member of the FMCT and weight recorder on the day rescued. Data to be recorded will include suburb of rescue, species, sex, age, weight, forearm measurement and microchip/band number if applicable.

An orphan flying-fox rehabilitation program will consist of:

Rescue

1. A member of the FMCT or Fauna Rescue Bat Rescue Hotline will organise rescues.
2. The rescuer will not automatically be allocated the flying-fox for care.
3. After consultation with members of the FMCT, orphans are to be placed with a FRSA carer most suited to meet the needs of the flying-fox and/or have animals of similar age.

Initial care: Stabilising

1. All initial care/stabilising will be supervised by the FMCT or appointed experienced carer approved by the FMCT.

Rearing

1. All carers must be trained, vaccinated and approved by the FMCT.
2. Carers must be prepared to obtain equipment required (as outlined in committee approved training manual) and commit to the required period of care (under normal birthing conditions Oct/Nov until Jan/Feb) and follow standards of care set out in committee approved training manual.
3. Carers must document weight, forearm measurement and diet for each animal in their care weekly and pass information on to a FMCT approved weight recorder on the day recorded.

Creching

1. Creche is the first socialising stage for orphans and under normal birthing conditions will occur Dec/Jan. Timing may vary due to seasonal circumstances (early or late births).
2. Orphans are to be creched on the date deemed appropriate by the FMCT and weight recorder.
3. Orphans will be creched with other flying-foxes of a similar forearm measurement, weight and age or individual specific needs as deemed appropriate by the FMCT.
4. Orphans must not be creched earlier than 12 weeks of age or later than 14 weeks of age unless there are extenuating circumstances as deemed appropriate by the FMCT.
5. Orphans must be creched in groups of no less than 10 flying-foxes.
6. Orphans are to be creched in aviaries no less than 20 feet in length. No more than 20 animals are to be housed in an aviary of this size.
7. No creche aviary regardless of size is to contain more than 30 animals.
8. Animals are to remain in creche for a minimum of 3 weeks.
9. The FMCT will determine the most age appropriate creche facility for each hand-reared young and juvenile flying-fox rescued by FRSA members.
10. All animals presented for creche are to be weighed and a forearm measurement recorded. Each animal will be fitted with a plastic thumb band or appropriate form of identification (no neck collars).
11. A “Weekly Growth Record Sheet” must be presented with each animal entering creche.
12. All animals in creche must be weighed weekly and their weight recorded (forearm measurements are not required at this stage). This will determine that their progress during creche is conducive to a successful release (adequate weight gain indicates low stress levels and animals are adopting age appropriate social skills).
13. No carers will be permitted to visit their flying-fox/es once they enter creche.
14. All creche aviaries are to be located at the furthest point from sight and sound of human activity.
15. Creche carers are the only carers permitted to enter creche aviaries and are only to enter twice daily.
 - Morning: to check animals, collect buckets and clean aviary.
 - Late afternoon: at least 1-2 hours before dusk to hang feed buckets. If blossom is available; it must also be hung at the same time as feeding buckets (not during the day).
16. The gauge and wire spacing used to construct creche aviaries to prevent predators and damage to flying-fox feet are: roof, gauge = 3mm, spacing = 25mm. Sides, front and back, spacing & gauge = 25mm.

Release

1. After 3-4 weeks in creche, animals now enter the release stage.
2. A release program is to be developed between appropriate carer groups, with final decision making by the FMCT and FRSA committee.
3. All animals on entering the release aviary are to be weighed and a forearm measurement recorded.
4. All animals will be fitted with a stainless-steel thumb band by an approved Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme bander.
5. The Fauna Rescue release aviary located in Botanic Park can house up to 80 animals per release. A release aviary should not contain less than 30 animals.
6. All release aviaries are to be constructed with a false roof at least 30cm (12inches) above the top of the aviary (this is to prevent birds of prey, possums, rats, snakes and any other birds or animals from coming into direct contact with the flying-foxes). The Adelaide release facility will also require vermin proofing.
7. Release facilities must provide uninterrupted flight extending the full length of the aviary. Three to four hessian sacks are to be placed at each end of the aviary, approximately 36cm (14 inches) from the wire. This prevents animals from landing on the wire, causing injury. Two or three sacks (depending on the length of the aviary) must also be placed on the sides. Internal ropes must not be used in the release aviary as these do not encourage flight.
8. Release is the final stage in the dehumanising process for young flying-foxes. Human contact will now be restricted to one visit per day, by the feeding team.
9. The release program will include support feeding for as long as necessary.
10. Release aviaries will be of minimum dimensions; length 9 metres, height 2½ metres, width 2½ (28ft x 8ft x 8ft).
11. Gauge and wire spacing used to construct release aviaries to prevent predators entering and damage to flying-fox feet are: gauge = 3mm; spacing = 25mm.

Juvenile, Sub-adult and Adult Flying-foxes

1. A flying-fox aged 3 – 6 months is termed juvenile, from 6 months to 18 months sub-adult and over 18 months adult.
2. All juvenile, sub-adult and adult flying-foxes will be placed with a FRSA carer who has the most appropriate facilities, can meet the needs of the flying-fox in their care and has FMCT approval.
3. All juvenile, sub-adult and adult flying-foxes not euthanased on the day of rescue are to be held in isolation cages for Lyssavirus observation for a minimum of 3 days; excluding HSE juveniles where multiple flying-foxes are coming into care at the same time.
4. HSE animals will be held in separate aviaries/cages to rehabilitating and hand-reared animals until they are established on a fruit diet (5 – 10 days). This will also provide the appropriate Lyssavirus isolation requirement.
5. All juveniles after isolation are to be held in creche aviaries with hand-reared young and soft released through a release facility, under the same procedures as orphans.
6. No sub-adult or adult animal is to be held in care longer than 8 weeks. The only exception is lactating females with young attached.
7. Sub-adult and adult flying-foxes are to be hard released back into the colony.
8. All sub-adult and adult animals are to be banded prior to release by an approved Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme bander and the numbers recorded with the FMCT.
9. All juvenile, sub-adult and adult flying-foxes that come into care must be scanned for a microchip and the number provided to a FMCT member.
10. A FMCT member must be notified immediately when a banded animal is rescued (dead or alive). All band returns (dead or alive) must be reported to the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme.