

WHAT TO DO WITH A WIGGLING WOMBAT!

Aren't all little furry native critters **cute**? Don't you just **love** baby **kangaroos**? Don't you just want to hug a baby **wombat**, pat a **possum** and keep a **wallaby** as a pet?

Well, did you know that keeping a pet wombat is illegal? Did you know that possums can bite really hard? Did you know that a kangaroo joey will grow into an adult and it could be taller than you?

In fact, keeping any Australian native animal as a pet is illegal in NSW and in most states of Australia. Special permits are needed to be a wildlife carer and specialist training is required so that you can tend to their very specific needs.

Caring for a native animal, such as a kangaroo or a wombat or a possum is not like caring for your dog or your cat. They're hard to care for!! Many professionals such as vets still don't know a lot about native animals and are still learning about illnesses and diseases.

And it's a sad fact of life that native animals can get very sick very quickly if kept in the wrong conditions. In fact, a kangaroo joey for example, can literally keel over and die if it is stressed or "*distressed*".

So what causes distress in a native animal? Loud children - even if they're playing happily and aren't intentionally being frightening. Dogs and cats - domestic animals are the natural predators of most native animals and the fear of dogs and cats is usually instinct in native animals. Keeping a joey near a dog can frighten it so much that it can die instantly or over a prolonged period.

So, **What to do with a Wiggling Wombat** is going to teach you a bit about what you can do if you come across an injured, sick or orphaned native animal. With this knowledge you will be helping wildlife carers rehabilitate native animals and return them to the bush.....



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wild – how they're supposed to be!



so, what do you do if you come across a wiggling wombat in distress?

Handling a native animal can be a tricky affair! Why? Because they're **wild** that's why! When a **possum** or a kangaroo or any native animal is handled for the first time they think that you're going to **eat** them! All they can see is this massive **ugly** thing looking at them with big ugly eyes and with big white **teeth** just wanting to gobble them down. So they go into protection mode – and they will do *anything* to **protect** themselves – scratch you with their sharp claws and **bite** you with their even sharper teeth!

If you see a native animal that has been injured it is recommended that you don't touch it! If you pick it up the wrong way, or squeeze just a bit too tightly then you might do it more damage. Here is what I think you should do – grab a big blanket or towel and if you can, gently throw it over the animal and then be as quiet as a mouse.

When an animal is put in a dark and quiet environment it nearly always calms down. Its heart rate should drop, its body temperature should cool down and it should, with any luck, *de-stress*.

After you've covered the animal go and get Mum or Dad and get them to carefully pick the animal up and put it somewhere dark and quiet and then call an experienced wildlife carer or your local vet and ask them if they can come and pick the animal up.

You can find phone numbers for local wildlife organisations in the phone book. The local vet hospital or police station might also be able to help you find someone to care for the animal.



1. Can you guess what this animal is?

so, how does your mum or dad pick up a wiggling wombat?

Each native animal has different ways of being **handled** and the different **techniques** are as much for the person's benefit as it is the animals. After all, we want to keep those claws and **teeth** away from us at all times!

Remind your parents to be **gentle** with the animal at all times and be sure to tell them if they're too scared to touch the animal then **don't**! Helping a native animal in distress it at your own **risk**!

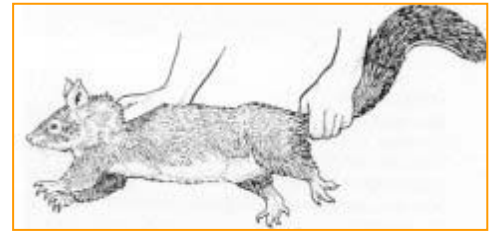
Rescue Technique for a Possum or Glider

Beware of the teeth and claws of a possum or glider. Damage from these animals can be quite severe and wounds inflicted may become infected.

To Capture a possum or glider you should wear a pair of gloves. Wearing gloves can fool you about how hard you're really holding an animal, so but be sure you don't squash the possum! Use a pillowcase or hessian bag and scoop the animal inside. For joeys, use an old jumper sleeve, a lamb's wool boot or similar, and place inside a larger bag. Ensure that the top of the pillowcase or bag is secured tightly. Alternatively, securely wrap the animal in a thick towel or blanket.

To Handle a possum or glider, gently but firmly hold the back of the head and the base of its tail.

To Transport a possum or glider, place the animal, still wrapped in the blanket or pillowcase, into a box big enough so that it can't move around too much. Ensure that the animal is kept in a dark and quite place (eg: do not play the radio).



Illustrator Sharon White
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2. **Can you guess** what this animal is?

Do you know what a *macropod* is?

"Macropodoidea" is the name of a superfamily that includes the kangaroo, wallaroo, wallaby and potaroo. "Macro" is Greek for big and "pod" is Greek for foot. The superfamily is then divided into two families; the Potoroidae, including the rat-kangaroo, potoroo and bettong; and the Macropodidae, comprising of the kangaroo, wallaby, pademelon and wallaroo.

Rescue Technique for a kangaroo, wallaby or wallaroo

Beware of the claws, hind legs and teeth of a kangaroo, wallaby or wallaroo. Damage inflicted can be severe and infection may occur.

To Capture a kangaroo, wallaby or wallaroo throw a blanket over the animal and wrap it up. Alternatively, place the animal, head first, into a hessian bag or similar type of bag.

To Handle a kangaroo, wallaby or wallaroo, firmly hold the base of the tail. Ensure you don't hold it by the tip of the tail as you can damage the spine. Keep the hind legs away from your body as it may try to kick.

To Transport a kangaroo, wallaby or wallaroo you can place a small animal into a pillowcase or similar, and then place it into a larger and stronger bag. For a larger animal place it in a hessian bag and secure the top.



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3. **Can you guess** what this animal is?

Do you know what *nocturnal* means?

An animal that is active by night is said to be nocturnal.

Do you know what a *monotreme* is?

A Monotreme is an egg laying mammal and there are only two found in the world, the Echidna and the Platypus.

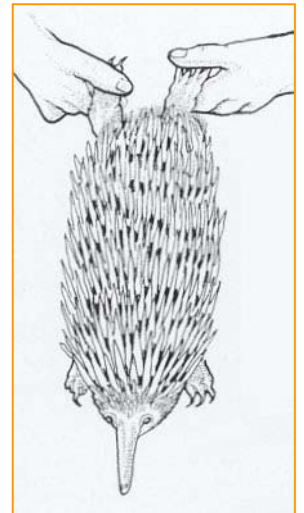
Rescue Technique for an Echidna

Beware of the Echidna's spines. Although no serious injury should be received, the spines can prick the skin so it is advisable to wear gloves. Wearing gloves can fool you about how hard you're really holding an animal, so but be sure you don't squash the Echidna!

To Capture an Echidna spray water on the beak area and when it moves pick it up. Alternatively, try to dig in around the echidna using your hands only – the use of a spade may cause injury. The Echidna may try to hold onto the ground or roots, etc, gently pull the animal away - do not yank it.

To Handle an Echidna, grab the hind legs and lift up. The animal may try to hold onto the ground or roots etc, gently pull the animal away, do not yank it. Alternatively, try to manoeuvre your hands underneath the Echidna, it should roll over your hands. Place the animal head first into a plastic box or crate.

To Transport an Echidna use a deep plastic bin, big enough so that it can't slide around. Do not use a cardboard box as the Echidna can easily break through it.



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Do you know what a *rhinarium* is?

It is the area of skin, often moist, around the nostrils of a mammal (ie: the nose).

Do you know what *sedentary* means?

A sedentary animal occupies the same territory year after year.



4. **Can you guess** what this animal is?

Rescue Technique for a Platypus

Beware of the spur on the hind legs of a male Platypus. The spur injects a poisonous fluid which causes paralysis.

To Capture a Platypus, throw a towel or blanket over the animal and wrap it up.

To Handle a Platypus, hold the base of its tail. Ensure you don't hold it by the tip of the tail as you can damage the spine. Make sure that the back of the animal is toward you. Place the Platypus head first into a box.

To Transport a Platypus, use a wooden or plastic box, big enough that it can't slide around inside.



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5. **Can you guess** what this animal is?

Do you know what torpid means?

A period of inaction, idleness or sleeping. For example, some animals go into "torpor" during winter months (hibernation).



6. **Can you guess** what this animal is?

Rescue Technique for a Wombat

Beware of the teeth and claws of a wombat. Wombats have incredibly aggressive natures and will readily attack. Wombats suffer from mange and the parasite can be transferred to humans, so ensure that an infected animal does not make contact with skin.

To Capture a wombat throw a thick blanket over the animal or try to coerce it into a box.

To Handle a wombat, hold it under its arms close to its armpit, so it cannot reach your hands to bite them. Hold the wombat so that its back is toward you.

To Transport a wombat use a large wooden or plastic crate, big enough so that it can't slide around. It is important to use a strong box as the wombat will attempt to dig itself out.



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Do you know what *incubate* means?

When an adult bird sits on eggs for the purpose of hatching.

Do you know what *diurnal* means?

An animal that is active by day is said to be diurnal.



7. Can you guess what this animal is?

Rescue Technique for a Koala

Beware of the claws and teeth of the koala. Koalas can become quite aggressive and can cause considerable damage with its claws.

To Capture a Koala, throw a blanket over the animal and securely wrap it up. Alternatively place the Koala into a hessian bag.

To Handle a Koala, use one hand to firmly grip the scruff of the neck and the other to support its rump.

To Transport a Koala use a wooden box, large enough for the animal to sit upright. For long distances, place an upright branch inside the box for the Koala to cling too. For short distances the Koala can be transported in a hessian bag.



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8. Can you guess what this animal is?



9. Can you guess what this animal is?

so, what do you feed a wiggling wombat?

Really, the best **advice** on what to feed the animal you have found – is **nothing!** Native animals require specific diets and giving the **wrong** type of food can make it very ill and may even **kill** it! I know you want to do the very **best** you can for the animal and the best thing is to contact an experienced carer and ask them to **help**.

In an absolute emergency!, when you think that the animal you have found has been on the ground for a long time and may be **dehydrated** you can give it some **fluids** to stop it from dehydrating even more, which could lead to death. Mix the following **ingredients** together:

- ✦ 1 cup of pre-boiled tepid water – not too hot and not too cold
- ✦ 1 teaspoon of sugar
- ✦ A pinch of salt (so you can just taste it)

While the **animal** is contained in the blanket expose just the snout area and slowly trickle the water on the side of its **mouth**. Do not under any **circumstances** try to force the water into the mouth or you may get water into the airways which could **drown** the animal.

Only **attempt** to do this if a carer cannot get to you straight away and ensure that the animal has been left alone for at **least** two hours before giving water so that it can *de-stress*.



10. Can you guess what this animal is?

Do you know what zoonosis means?

Zoonosis is a disease, illness or infection of animals that can be transmissible to humans, for example: ticks, mange, Tuberculosis, Chlamydiosis, Dermatitis, Bat Lyssavirus.



11. Can you guess what these animals are?

so, what can you read to find out more about wiggling wombats?

Caring for Australian Wildlife

Sharon White
ISBN: 1 86276 021 7
Published by Australian Geographic

Mammals of Australia

Australian Museum – Reed New Holland
ISBN 1 876334 88 6

Ozark

www.ozark.wild.net.au - This site has an excellent photo gallery, information sheets and an exceptional resource section.

Fourth Crossing Wildlife

www.members.optusnet.com.au/~fourth_crossing. This site is owned by the author of these notes, Linda Dennis. At Fourth Crossing Wildlife you can find stories, photos, information and short term care tips (if you can't get the animal to a carer straight away) on Australian native animals.



12. **Can you guess** what this animal is?

so, what were the borrowed graphics for this wiggling wombat document?

Handling graphics:

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Can you guess?

1. Wallaroo - male
2. Brushtail Possum
3. An Eastern Grey Kangaroo
4. Swamp Wallaby
5. Common Wombat joey
6. Common Wombat
7. Red-Necked Wallaby
8. Wallaroo - female
9. Feathertail Glider
10. Echidna
11. Tasmanian Devil
12. Brushtail Possum

For more information or help please contact

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or contact your nearest wildlife organisation
or local vet.

Special thanks to Bron Reed and Christine Riding for editing this wiggling wombat document.

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