



Koala News



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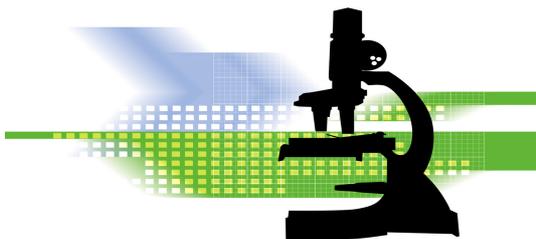
Koala Disease Research Fund

On 29 August the Queensland Government announced four projects that will be funded (a total of \$400,000 between them) to research Koala disease. All applications for funding were assessed against the following priorities:

- Assess and develop appropriate methods to reduce vulnerability of wild populations to disease;
- Quantify the impacts of disease on breeding rates; and
- Develop tools that result in improved management outcomes.

The four successful projects are:

- University of Queensland – study to determine the relationship between stress and disease to identify the ultimate causes of infertility and disease.
- University of Queensland – study to identify the relationship between habitat loss and other environmental stressors for disease in Koalas.
- Queensland University of Technology – continued development of a possible vaccine against Chlamydia which continues to be a major threat to the medium-to-long-term survival of the Koala.
- University of Melbourne and Melbourne Zoo – assessment of Chlamydia infection and identification of the factors which determine the prevalence of clinical diseases resulting from infection.



\$400,000 will not stretch far, but it is a good start to supplement the existing research which has been historically chronically underfunded.

More koalas... (Julie Z)

"I think I need a rest from koalas for a while" said Evelynn Coutts, koala carer extraordinaire. Her last two koalas, Jazzy and Kelly, required a lot of care and attention, and although Jazzy died from koala retrovirus disease, Kelly went on to Australia Zoo's pre-release program.

After a visit to Kelly at Australia Zoo, Evelynn came home with Samson, an orphan from Pine Rivers. A short time later Charlie appeared on the scene. He was an orphan from Lismore and was easily distinguished from Samson because of his unusually dark face. The boys settled in well and were soon munching gum leaves enthusiastically. About 3 weeks later Evelynn received a call from Sue Holmes, who runs the Gatton based rescue group FAUNA to say that a young female koala that should still have been on mum's back had been found alone on a busy major road between Gatton and Esk. She went home with Evelynn, and then there were 3 furry leaf munchers in the house.



*Samson (Top),
Munchkin &
Charlie.
Mmm..nice
robusta*

The koalas were all around a kilo in weight when they came into care and are all doing well. The boys are developing the scent glands on their chest that they use to mark territory and already have their own distinctive aroma. Play is an important part of any young creature's development, and young koalas sure know how to party. There is lots of jumping from tree to tree, thudding down onto the floor, chasing each other, and the occasional squawk of protest when one gets too rough.

As always the koalas are a joy to have around and carers are mindful of how privileged they are to spend time with these wonderful animals, and as always, Evelynn once again is saying "I think I need a rest from koalas for a while".

Travis Mckoy (by Sam Longman)



I received Travis on father's day he is an eight month old little boy koala joey, who was travelling on his mums back when she was hit by a car. The car that hit them did not stop and help them, fortunately other members of the public travelling along this road came across the two injured koala's and stopped to help them. Travis and his mum were laying metres apart on the road and the family thought they were both dead but upon inspection little Travis sat up and started crying for his mum. The kind people picked him up and placed him back with his mum who was barely breathing. They picked both koala's up took them home and phoned the Moreton Bay Koala Rescue, but unfortunately before the rescue team arrived Travis's mum died of her severe injuries.

Travis was also in a critical condition after being thrown from his mums back he hit the road face first, and had sustained 2 broken nasal bones. He also had internal bleeding around his lungs and severe bruising to his face and chest. The Australian Wildlife Hospital treated him for his injuries and gave him pain relief and placed in the intensive care unit. When I picked him up on the Sunday his little face just melted my heart, he was so confused and he was missing his mum terribly. Thankfully I have another little koala joey in care and when I bought Travis home he settled straight in with Quandie.

He immediately sat behind Quandie, lay his face on Quandie's back and went to sleep. For the next 3 or 4 nights Travis cried for his mum which just broke my heart. He has now settled in really well, I think he is part frog as he jumps everywhere. He and Quandie wrestle and play of a night and get up to no good.

He still has a few problems going on but hopefully they will all clear up soon. I know deep down that little Travis still misses his mum as no matter how well we look after these little ones we just cannot replace their mums.

Koala Evolution

The first arboreal koalas probably evolved from a terrestrial wombat-like ancestor, perhaps to take advantage of a food resource not being utilized by others.

Koalas were once much more widespread across Australia: fossil koala species are known from southern, western and central Australia when rainforest was more widespread across these parts of the continent.

There are now six genera and at least 18 species of fossil koalas (some species are not yet described). All are from either South Australia or Queensland (Riversleigh).



Nimiokoala greystanesi was a small koala from the early Miocene of northern Australia. It had a longer snout than the living koala but was only about a third of its size. *Nimiokoala* is represented by a well preserved skull, a significant discovery since koalas are rare in the fossil record.

Nimiokoala would have fed on the leaves of forest trees although it is not known whether it specialized on the leaves of eucalypts, as the living koala does.

Source: <http://australianmuseum.net.au>

If you would like to contribute to future editions of the Koala News, please contact Paulette Jones paulette@biodiversity.tv

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