

THEY'RE SPREADING SEEDS NOT DISEASE – LIVING WITH FLYING-FOXES AS NEIGHBOURS

INSERT LOCAL TOWN/AREA HERE residents can rest easy in the knowledge that contrary to popular belief, the risk of contracting a disease from flying-foxes is extremely low, and they pose no major health risks, unless people are bitten or scratched by one.

As the flap of wings, gliding bodies and screeches of flying-foxes once more become a familiar part of our dusk landscape, Council is urging residents to be tolerant as these little Aussie battlers settle in for another season of roosting and feeding.

With flying-fox colonies now bunking down and making their presence felt at various locations throughout the region, it is hoped residents will exercise neighbourly tolerance and spare a thought for the plight of these hard working Aussie mammals, who are working hard to propagate our forests.

Flying-foxes are keystone pollinators and seed dispersers of the Australian bush. They typically migrate across the Eastern seaboard following the fruiting and flowering seasons of rainforests and the flowering season of paperbark and eucalyptus forests.

Council's Environmental Officer XXX XXXX said like all wild animals, flying-foxes carried some disease, but it was extremely rare for humans to be harmed in any way by their presence.

'People should use their common sense and never touch a flying-fox,' **XXXX** said.

'The Bat Lyssavirus is only present in about two percent of the entire national population, and it is not spread through droppings or urine,' **he/she** said.

'So provided basic hygiene measures are taken, and you never touch a flying-fox unless you are trained and vaccinated against Bat Lyssavirus, there is no call for concern. It's also a myth they have rabies'.

Hendra virus outbreaks are also very rare, and there is no evidence humans can contract the virus directly from flying-foxes. Hendra can be transferred from flying-foxes to horses and then from horses to humans, but there have only been a handful of cases where this has occurred, and all incidents occurred in Queensland. As a precaution, it is recommended horses and their food and water troughs be moved from areas where flying-foxes are roosting or feeding.

XXXX Council's Environmental Officer XXX XXXX said while it could be unpleasant for residents and communities who were living with camps of flying-foxes nearby, it was a temporary situation calling for some tolerance and patience. Anyone being seriously impacted by Flying-fox camps should contact us on **XXXXXXX**'

More information about flying-foxes can be found on the website www.littleaussiebat.com.au.

Media: Council contact

BACKGROUND INFO

TIPS FOR LIVING WITH YOUR FLYING FOX NEIGHBOURS:

- Don't disturb them – they make more noise when stressed
- Do not directly handle a dead flying-fox – wear thick gloves, wrap it in a plastic bag and wash your hands
- Don't keep food and water for pets (particularly horses) under trees
- Cover your cars, washing and outdoor areas as droppings are pungent and corrosive
- Contact your local wildlife rescue group if you find an injured flying-fox
- Remove horses from paddocks where flying-foxes are roosting or feeding – RURAL COUNCILS ONLY

IN YOUR BACKYARD:

If you experience an individual or small group of flying-foxes feeding at night in your garden, this will likely occur until the tree has finished fruiting. If you do not want flying-foxes feeding in your backyard, remove the fruit manually or properly net the tree to make access for the flying-foxes difficult. There are simple, non-harmful deterrents which may be of assistance on your property, such as:

- Creating a visual/sound/smell barrier with fencing or hedges with plants that do not produce edible fruit or nectar-exuding flowers
- Planting a buffer of low vegetation such as shrubs, providing a screen between your yard and roosting /feeding trees
- Placing predator decoys (eg owls) or reflective/shiny deterrents (eg CDs or aluminium foil strips) on verandas or in trees
- Keeping food or habitat trees trimmed
- When landscaping, plant fruit or habitat trees away from your home (or don't use these plants at all).

For more information, visit <http://littleaussiebat.com.au>