

Wildlife and fire response

Wildlife Emergency Support Network (WESN) Vet and vet nurse selection criteria 2023



Image: Zoos Victoria

Introduction

The Wildlife Emergency Support Network (WESN) is seeking expressions of interest from qualified veterinarians and qualified veterinary nurses to join the WESN.

Refer to the Wildlife Emergency Support Network (WESN) Fact sheet for veterinarians and vet nurses – 2023 for background.

Veterinarians and veterinary nurses are invited to express interest to fill roles of:

- Triage veterinarian
- Triage veterinary nurse
- Field veterinarian (preferably experienced darter, with own weapon).

It is important to be aware that training is not free access. Non-agency wildlife response resources are selected based on experience, fitness for the role and a DEECA regional Model of Cover, this ensures that we are proactively preparing individuals to support the response during wildlife emergencies, state-wide as well as within their own region. A region by region focus ensures robust team preparedness, utilisation

of local knowledge and allows for familiarity between local WESN members and DEECA officers. However, response is not necessarily limited to your own region, it will be event dependent. Individuals should also be aware that participating in the training program, does not guarantee deployment during a fire, nor under any circumstances, qualify people to undertake any wildlife emergency or wildlife impacted by fire response of their own accord.

Spaces are limited; therefore, we are seeking individuals who have an interest in wildlife emergency response and in the care and welfare of Australian native species. In applying, individuals should consider availability to deploy over the fire season, generally October to March. Deployment is for a standard 7-day period – 5 days working, with a travel day either side, it is not possible to do shorter stints. All accommodation and food will be supplied by DEECA.

Individuals should only apply if you think it is realistic you would be able to respond to a request to deploy, sometimes with short notice. A solid written commitment is not required and of course life happens but it is good to really consider availability.

Consider discussing deployment with your employer and family.

Training is targeted to prepare domestic animal vets and nurses for emergency response and case presentations we expect during a bushfire. It captures the state emergency response arrangements as well as the basic assessment of native wildlife, initial stabilisation, and treatment of burn injuries, with the intention animals rapidly transfer out of triage to wildlife hospitals.

It is important to note training is not intended to be a pathway for domestic vets and nurses to be wildlife veterinary professionals; it must be recognised it takes many years to build knowledge and skill in specific areas such as wildlife medicine. As shown below, triage veterinarians and veterinary nurses will deploy alongside Zoos Victoria veterinary teams to provide guidance and support in a challenging environment and to assist in continuing the development of skills and knowledge. Field veterinarians will deploy into DEECA field teams, supported by experienced wildlife rescuers and carers and DEECA field crew.

Triage Team Roles

- Triage Trained Veterinarian
- Triage Trained Veterinary Nurse

Field Assessment Team Roles

- Field Trained Veterinarian

Ideal Candidate

Please consider the following carefully. If you are unsure about any aspect, please contact the WESN Coordinator.

Individuals should have sound, and be confident in, veterinary practical skills, knowledge and rapid decision making, and be willing to and capable to work in a high-pressure environment with very limited resources. There may be circumstances where many severely injured animals present at one time, you must be able to remain calm, think on your feet, adapt and be methodical in your approach.

Individuals should have the ability to adapt to a rapidly changing and intense work environment. The work can be very distressing, chaotic, and stressful. It is extremely important teams respect the leadership of DEECA and remain considerate and supportive of team members.

Individuals should understand that wildlife response during an emergency is a welfare response, not a rescue mission. Animals impacted by fire are often critically injured, expect that most will be euthanised and that only a small percentage of animals will be candidates for treatment, rehabilitation and release.

Selection Criteria to identify suitability of applicants

Triage Veterinarian

Essential

- A degree in Veterinary Science, registerable in Victoria
- Minimum 3 years' current clinical experience
- Ability to deploy for 7-day periods - 5 days in triage, with a travel day either side
- Willingness to have contact details recorded on an internal database

Desirable

- Understanding of veterinary equipment set up, such as anaesthetic machines
- Experience in emergency and critical care
- Experience working with wildlife

Field Veterinarian

Essential

- A degree in Veterinary Science, registerable in Victoria
- Minimum 3 years' current clinical experience
- Ability to deploy for 7-day periods - 5 days in field, with a travel day either side
- Willingness to have contact details recorded on an internal database

Desirable

- Darting experience and confidence in, ideally macropod darting experience
- Dart rifle
- Field work experience
- Experience in the distance visual assessment of native wildlife
- Experience working with wildlife

Veterinary Nurse

Essential

- Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing
- Minimum 3 years ongoing, in clinic, working at Certificate IV level
- Ability to deploy for 7-day periods - 5 days in triage, with a travel day either side
- Willingness to have contact details recorded on an internal database
- Understanding of veterinary equipment set up, such as anaesthetic machines

Desirable

- Experience in emergency and critical care
- Experience working with wildlife.

If you would like further information about joining the WESN, please email Fiona Ryan as the WESN Coordinator at WESN@zoo.org.au.

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