

Shocking Koala attack - RSPCA calls for tougher penalties

By Bruce Atkinson, Annie Gaffney, Janel Shorthouse

A critically injured koala will undergo surgery in south east Queensland today to remove seven air rifle pellets from its body.

The six-year-old koala was found at Kippa-Ring north of Brisbane with slugs in its limbs and head.

It has been taken to the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital on the Sunshine Coast.

Spokesman Brian Coulter says the injured male koala was found yesterday but it appears it was shot up to a week ago.

"The vets need to stabilise the koala before it can go in for operations to have the pellets removed.

"The other thing that we've got to worry about is that one of the pellets is lodged in its skull," says Mr Coulter.

The male koala now named Fleet by staff is receiving treatment from Wildlife Veterinarian Dr Amber Gillett, who has described the attack as shocking.

"X-rays have revealed seven pellets littered throughout his body, including one that is lodged in his skull... Fleet has one pellet lodged in his skull, lower back and behind his ear as well as one pellet in each limb which could indicate that he was deliberately shot from all angles," says Dr Gillett.

Angered and concerned by the increase in similar cases, Dr Gillett confirms this is the fourth koala in two years that has been treated for gunshot wounds.

"I am stunned to see this kind of animal cruelty, and cannot begin to fathom why somebody would want to shoot a koala that poses no threat to them.

"Koala populations are already in serious decline in South East Queensland and incidents such as these add unnecessary pressure to a species already struggling to survive," says Dr Gillett.

Due to overwhelming public concern already, the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital has set up an [Everyday Hero](#) page for Fleet and others like him in care at the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital.

Staff at the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital urge the public to call their 24hr wildlife emergency hotline on 1300 369 652 for any wildlife emergencies.



Fleet the Koala receives treatment at the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital on the Sunshine Coast (Photo supplied)

RSPCA calls for tougher penalties

Earlier this week, RSPCA's Chief Executive Officer Mark Townend commented on amendments to Animal Cruelty laws in Queensland currently being debated in parliament - he says the court system needs to toughen their approach.

"The laws are already there, certainly tougher laws and higher penalties would help but what we're very concerned about is that the Government has ignored advice from the RSPCA, the police, the barristers and our own inspectorate by putting it in the criminal code rather than just using the Animal Protection Act," says Mr Townend.

Mr Townend says the RSPCA won't be able to prosecute if the amendments result in legislation added to the Criminal Code.

"You'll be leaving it up to police, now maybe the police are over resourced, they might have lots of time, but what I read in the newspapers and the media that's certainly not the case - the experts in animal welfare and animal cruelty is the RSPCA and not the police," says Mr Townend.

