

Koala shot and left for dead

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Australia Zoo staff treat the injured koala. *Photo: Ben Beaden*

The RSCPA has launched an investigation into a "heinous" attack on a koala that was shot several times and left for dead in Kippa-Ring in the north of Brisbane.

Assistant Chief Inspector Tracey Jackson said the RSCPA was disturbed by the "cruel act".

"With four cases of the same nature against koalas in the last two years, this is more than just coincidence," said said.



The shot koala. *Photo: Ben Beaden*

"RSPCA believes it's either a case of a copycat, or it's the same individual or individuals who are responsible.

"It's cases like these you hope to never see, but unfortunately, they are becoming all too common."

The RSCPA was working with police to track down the culprit.

Vet Amber Gillett said the six-year-old male koala, now named Fleet, sustained injuries consistent with a slug gun and x-rays revealed seven pellets all over his body including one 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," she said.

"Fleet will require intensive monitoring and care over the coming days.

"My biggest concern for Fleet at the moment is the spread of infection. He is suffering from severe infection in his back leg which is associated with a pellet wound."

It is suspected that the koala was shot up to a week ago. Fleet was rescued from high in a tree yesterday.

Australian Zoo Rescue manager Brian Coulter found the koala after a tip off from Moreton Bay Koala Rescue Inc.

"The koala had a severe wound on its nose which clearly required immediate treatment," he said.

Fleet remains in the intensive care unit of the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital and was due to undergo surgery today to remove the pellets.

Dr Gillett said it was fairly minor surgery because the pellets missed all the vital organs. But given his weight loss and condition, the koala's recovery was expected to take two to three months.

Fleet might have only lived for another one or two weeks if left untreated, according to Dr Gillett.

"He's lost quite a lot of bodily function, he has quite a nasty infection on his back leg, if that was allowed to fester and spread, he could die quite a horrible death out there because of sepsis," she said.

"If he hadn't been found, his prognosis if left in the wild would be exceptionally poor."

Dr Gillett was angered by the attack.

"I am ... concerned that this is the fourth koala in two years that has been presented to me at the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital suffering from shot gun wounds," she said.

"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 southeast Queensland and incidents such as these add unnecessary pressure to a species already struggling to survive."

Moreton Bay Koala Rescue Inc president Megan Aitken said the organisation's members were "absolutely disgusted and appalled by what's happened".

"Our groups has attended all three Senate inquires into the koalas and the sustainability of koalas, we know the decline and the trouble that they're in. And to see healthy breeding male [koalas] injured in this way, it's just another nail in their coffin," she said

The Wildlife Emergency hotline is 1300 369 652.

Australia Zoo has set up a Everyday Hero Page for Fleet and others koalas cared for at the hospital. To help Fleet, people can make a donation at www.everydayhero.com.au/event/koala.



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