

Battler Blair makes fourth hospital visit



By KIERAN CAMPBELL

BLAIR is the luckiest – or unluckiest – koala in Australia, depending on how you look at it.

The furry-eared little fellow is one of a huge influx of koalas being treated at the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital.

This is the fourth time Blair has needed the help of vets.

He was once mauled by a dog, twice hit by a car and is now fighting off cystitis, a urinary tract infection.

Wildlife vet Dr Amber Gillett said koalas were in the middle of their breeding season and there was a worrying number needing hospital treatment.

Blair is one of more than 763 koalas admitted in the past 12 months, making up a massive chunk of the 3300 wildlife patients this year.

Dr Gillett said it was feared this breeding season could result in the largest number of koalas being injured, predominantly by cars and dog attacks.

She said the injured wildlife would have “a massive effect” on the struggling koala population.

“Koala populations in south-east Queensland need all the help they can get,” Dr Gillett said.

“Taking just one healthy koala, let alone 763 koalas, out of that gene pool will have a massive effect on these already struggling animals.”

Dr Gillett said Blair was a battler.

During breeding season male koalas go in search of females, put-

ting them in danger of cars and at risk of being attacked.

Dr Gillett said motorists should be particularly vigilant from winter until Christmas.

The hospital has had some highly publicised patients, including Frodo the koala, who last year survived being peppered with shotgun pellets.

The most recent rescue for the zoo was koala Julius, who was viciously mauled by two dogs.

He managed to break free and escape up a high tree.

Unfortunately, he was so viciously mauled that vets could not save his life.

Dr Gillett said working with injured wildlife was “physically and emotionally taxing” on vets.

You can make donations to koalas in care at www.everydayhero.com.au/event/koala.

The 24-hour wildlife emergency hotline number is 1300 369 652.



KOALA PATIENTS

■ November 5, 2010: Koala joey Frodo peppered with 15 shotgun pellets.

■ December 29, 2010: Koala Meryl admitted again, less than 12 months after being treated for shotgun wounds.

■ January 10: Koala Amity Amy and joey Jetson admitted after being hit by a car.

■ March 24: Koala Heath admitted again, suffering anemia.

■ April 29: Koala Blair admitted again, suffering cystitis.

■ June 9: Koala Julius admitted after being mauled by two dogs. CPR was performed on Julius for 30 minutes but he sadly died from his injuries.

■ July 14: Koala Asha hit by two cars. He needed surgery to insert a plate in his jaw.

ON MEND AGAIN: Blair is one of a huge influx of koalas being treated at the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital.

PHOTO: BEN BEADEN