

Living Near Flying Foxes

Flying fox camps are increasingly setting up near towns and people because of the loss of their natural habitat and in response to local food availability. These camps can be challenging for the people that live near them.

Why have the flying foxes come to camp at Stonequarry Creek?

Flying fox camps are usually found in cool areas where there is a closed canopy of at least 5 metres tall with understorey and mid storey layers, near water and of a size of at least 1 Ha. One of the key features of this part of Stonequarry Creek is the steep sloping narrow sides of the creek bank and dense vegetation cover.

Can Council move them on?

Flying foxes are an important part of our ecosystem and are a protected species across Australia. Approval is required from the State Government before anyone can disturb or relocate their camps or modify their habitat. In some cases, further approval may be required from the Federal Government.

Moving on Flying fox camps is usually unsuccessful. Where dispersal activities have occurred in other parts of the state, the flying foxes have often returned the following season.

Disease Risks for People and Animals

The risk of flying foxes transmitting disease to humans is extremely low as infection can only occur if you are bitten or scratched, so it is very important that you never handle them. Disease is not spread through droppings or urine, so there is no risk if a flying fox flies overhead, feeds or roosts in your garden, or if you live near a camp or visit one.

Lyssavirus and Hendra virus are two diseases potentially associated with flying foxes. You can find out more information about these viruses from NSW Health's website:

- [Hendra Virus](#)
- [Lyssavirus](#)

Bites or scratches from flying foxes: If you are bitten or scratched by a flying fox, gently but thoroughly wash the wound immediately with soap and water for at least five minutes. Apply an antiseptic such as Povidone-iodine and consult a doctor as soon as possible.

Pets

According to the Australian Animal Health Laboratory there have been no reports of illness in pets caused by eating deceased flying foxes. However, pets should be kept away from flying foxes if possible to reduce likelihood of scratches or bites. If a pet becomes sick after contact with a flying fox, seek advice from a veterinarian. There is no evidence of dog to human transmission of Hendra virus.

Water Safety

There is no evidence that a flying fox camp has any impact on publicly available drinking water provided by local authorities. The water continues to be treated and this eliminates any contamination from additional flying fox faeces in the catchment.

If you live under the flying fox flight path it is likely that faeces will be washed into your rainwater tanks when it rains. NSW Health recommends against drinking water from rainwater tanks where there is public drinking water available. Advice on safely managing rainwater for drinking purposes where there is no alternative supply is available on the [NSW Health website](#).

Noise and smell

Flying foxes are noisy animals, but this noise is an important part of their society. When flying foxes are present in large numbers, this noise can understandably be a nuisance for residents.

They can also be smelly, particularly when many are present. Although this smell may be unpleasant to us, it is an important way that flying foxes communicate with each other, including between mother and baby.

Faeces

Flying foxes excrete either during flight or while holding onto a branch by their wing claws. The flying fox digestive system is much faster than a human system and their waste is primarily liquid.

Tips and Hints

- Don't disturb the flying foxes. When flying foxes get stressed, they tend to squabble and make even more noise. They are quietest when left alone.

Drying your clothes outdoors:

- Avoid hanging out your washing when flying foxes are leaving and returning to their camp. This is usually around sunrise and sunset however it may be useful to note the approximate times the flying foxes are leaving and returning. This will give you some level of control knowing when you will need to ensure your washing is brought in off the line.
- Some residents have chosen to cover their washing with a tarpaulin to protect it.
- To remove flying fox faeces from your washing, treat them like fruit stains. Soak the item as soon as possible (preferably while the stain is still wet) in a good stain remover. Unfortunately some fruits with strong coloured flesh (e.g. mulberries) may leave a permanent stain.

Cars and other painted or outdoor surfaces:

- To avoid the potential for damage to painted surfaces around your home such as cars and garden furniture it is recommended to remove the faeces regularly with soapy water before it dries.

Vegetation in your garden:

- Flying foxes prefer tall vegetation, so they may be deterred by trimming vegetation and removing branches from around houses or public buildings. If flying foxes have already set up camp in trees, contact the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) on 131 555 before trimming any of these trees.
- Planting a buffer of low vegetation, such as shrubs on your property can provide a screen between your house and flying foxes.
- Plant food trees preferred by flying foxes away from houses and orchards.

Useful Links:

[Office of Environment and Heritage](#)

[NSW Health](#)

[Department of Primary Industries](#)