

# RESEARCH PROJECT

## Healing Treatments for Wing Injuries in Flying Foxes

### General Information

Flying-foxes, Genus *Pteropus*, are critical to the health of our forests. Flying-foxes are the only pollinators which will cross large areas of open land. Flying-foxes will fly out up to 50 km in one night. The more we degrade our environment and the more we lose habitat the more isolated the remaining sections become and the more critical our flying-foxes become. Most flying-fox species are in decline, many listed as vulnerable, largely due to habitat loss and colony destruction. Interactions with human structures frequently result in sufficient damage to the wing that the animal must be euthanised.

Specific causes of injuries vary with the location and the time of year, however, in Sydney alone, hundreds of flying-foxes come into care each year. Of these:

- 17% due to electrocution on power lines (78% fatal),
- 17% due to miscellaneous physical injury (attacked, hit by cars, shot),
- 17% due to net caught 17% (in country areas this is replaced by barbed wire),
- less than ½ of these are released and ¼ are euthanised.

“Electrocution on powerlines, entanglement in netting and on barbed-wire” are listed as key threatening factors in the draft recovery plan for the GHFF (2005). Electrocutions are a prime cause of orphaning for GHFFs in the Sydney region and can account for 80% of young coming into care.

Typical injuries from the above events include: concussion, broken bones, and, frequently, damage to the wings. For example wing injuries result from most net entanglements, all barbed wire entanglements and many electrocutions, including some young injured via electrocuted mothers.

WAIF is supporting a Master's research project into determining suitable treatments for wing injuries to improve the chances of release after injury. This is under Dr Gemma O'Brien at the University of New England. Trials investigating treatments to improve the chances of release after injury are focusing on damage from entanglement (barbed wire and loose fruit-netting). Many treatments have been investigated: honey, Ilium Oticlean, macadamia oil, Tegaderm and Solosite, arnica, *aloe vera*, etc. Great success has been achieved with macadamia oil, Solosite and Tegaderm, and honey.

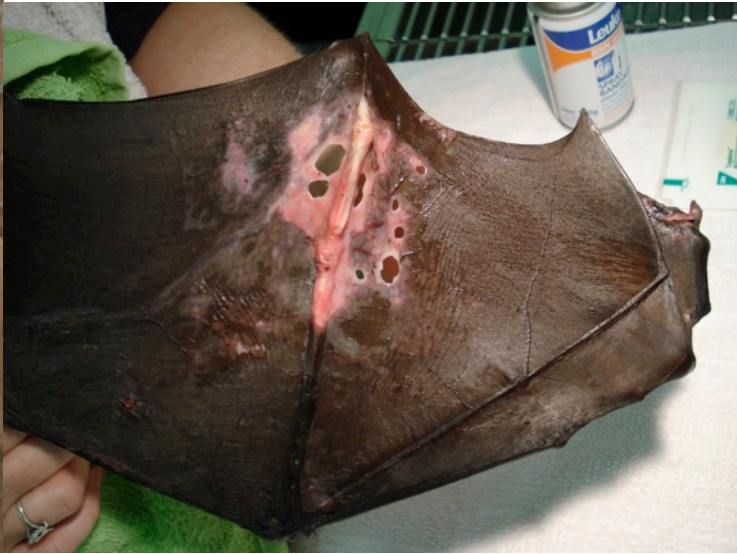
**Disclaimer: WAIF provides all information to the best of its knowledge as a guide only. An experienced veterinarian should be consulted before treating any animal.**



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