

Bendeela Wombat Treatment Program

Sarcoptic Mange

Sarcoptic mange is a condition commonly spread in animals and is caused by mites. Mange can make a wombat lose fur and develop sores on their skin, eyes and ears, resulting in sickness or death of the animal. The Bendeela Recreation Area is habitat for Bare-nosed Wombats (also known as Common Wombats), some of which suffer from Sarcoptic Mange. As with all wild animals it is important that visitors do not try to touch or pat wombats.

Previous trials

WaterNSW has been monitoring the situation and working with National Parks and Wildlife Service, the University of Tasmania and University of Sydney to find a solution. A number of trials were conducted to identify the best way to treat mange in wombats. This included a trial at Bents Basin with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and with the University of Tasmania at Narawntapu National Park in Tasmania. Both trials used Cydectin and have now finished. It was found that Cydectin was not suitable for Bendeela as the wombat population is large and not isolated from other wombats in the Kangaroo Valley area. It was also identified that Bravecto 'spot on for dogs', a topical flea and tick treatment commonly used by pet owners and vets, is more effective in the treatment of mange in wombats. Bravecto lasts longer, for approximately 30-90 days, and protects wombats from re-infection.

What was discovered during the Survey work?

A total of 477 observations of wombats were made during the surveys. This number included wombats that may have been sighted more than once so does not represent the wombat population at the site. 13 observations of wombats with signs of mange disease were made. Observations were consistent with mange occurring in up to 7 individual wombats. Conclusion from initial baseline surveys was that a small number of wombats with mange disease exist at Bendeela. Otherwise, it is a large and healthy wombat population. Beyond Bendeela, reports of mange in the Kangaroo Valley area appears lower in 2021 than previous years.



Dr Scott Carver from the University of Tasmania



Wombats at Bendeela

What has WaterNSW been doing to date?

Surveys of wombats and their mange status (Baseline Surveys) were undertaken from December 2020 to November 2021, by University of Tasmania and University of Sydney at Bendeela to gain an objective understanding of disease in the population site. A monthly treatment program at Bendeela started in 2022 and has been running for four months. In each survey we have treated 2-4 wombats with Bravecto. Treatments have been applied to wombats with clear signs of mange and also to wombats where there was a level of uncertainty, as a precautionary principal approach. The application of spot-on treatments using a pole approach has been successful, as wombats are relatively habituated to humans at Bendeela. Signs of recovery from mange disease have been observed in treated wombats.

The project team will be undertaking a detailed evaluation of the outcomes of the treatment program after six months.

Additional Research at Bendeela

WaterNSW has also provided approval for Sydney University to undertake additional research at Bendeela. This project aims to improve treatment and surveillance of wombat mange. Researchers will be assessing the effectiveness of using drone thermal imaging in population surveys and mange detection.

They will also be trialing different burrow flap designs to assess the most effective design. This Burrow flap work is only looking at design and will not be used to apply any chemical. This research will take place in August and September 2022 and will not impact on users of the campground.

Treatment program

The treatment phase of the program commenced in 2022. Treatment and disease monitoring surveys will run on a monthly basis for 3 to 4 months with the University then adapting the frequency of treatment if required. Targeted treatment will be administered by University of Tasmania around dusk and into the night when wombats are more active.

The treatment is being applied to wombats with visible signs of mange, via a pole delivering a 'spot on' dose of Bravecto, and to wombats where there is a level of uncertainty as a precautionary principal approach. This method requires no need for the animals to be captured and non-infected animals will not be impacted.

At the end of the program WaterNSW will have a long-term treatment guideline that will continue to be delivered.

Treatment location

Wombats will be treated on WaterNSW land in and around the Bendeela campground.

No camping areas will be closed and there will be minimal impact on campers.

Becoming involved

Wildlife Rescue South Coast and WIRES are the carer groups that cover the Kangaroo Valley Area. Any person wanting to be involved with caring for wildlife in the area should contact these groups.

WaterNSW will look for opportunities for wildlife carer groups to be involved after the initial treatment program has concluded.

Staying informed

For the duration of the treatment program the community will be kept informed through regular updates and via the website:

www.waternsw.com.au/supply/visit/bendeela-recreational-area



Estimated timeline

2020

Project team mobilises

2021

collection of baseline information completed
Treatment plan determined

2022

Treatment Plan designed and treatment commences

2023

Treatment program concludes

2024

Long term treatment guideline drafted and implemented

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