WIRES - VOLUNTEER PREPAREDNESS, ACTIVATION, AND RESPONSE TO WILDLIFE EMERGENCIES

Three years on from the Black Summer Bushfires work is still in progress to improve Australia's response to large-scale disasters and emergencies that impact wildlife.

The Royal Commission into the Black Summer Bushfires acknowledged that climate change fuelled the disaster and what was unprecedented is now our future and the escalating disaster risks require stronger actions to reduce the future risks. It further found that better coordination between agencies was required as well as an upgrade to firefighting capabilities, consistent public information and warning systems and prioritising mental health.

The over-arching responsibility for emergency response lies with the various states and territories in Australia and the capacity to respond is determined by state-based legislation and resource allocation. The Royal Commission recommended that *"the Australian Government establishes accountability and assurance mechanisms to promote continuous improvement and best practice in natural disaster arrangements."*

In NSW, A Wildlife Emergency Response Taskforce was established. This multi-agency taskforce brings together Government agencies such as emergency first responders, vets and other non-government organisations, wildlife organisations and educational institutions.

In addition, WIRES has undertaken a review of its own capabilities and actioned a range of initiatives to be better prepared for emergencies. Key to our strategy has been an increase in capacity to respond, a focus on more training for volunteers and improved preparedness for volunteers and employees.

As a volunteer driven sector supporting the rescue and care of wildlife affected by emergencies, disaster management for wildlife needs to support the best practice volunteer engagement to achieve a rapid and safe actions to enable optimal animal welfare outcomes. Volunteers with specialised skills and capabilities can and may be deployed across a range of incidents, from a routine operation within a small geographic range or species impact to an Incident Level 3 involving widespread and extensive geographic reach or species impact, such as flooding and bushfires.

In 2022, NSW and Southeast Queensland were impacted by two major flood emergencies. A key strategy for the flood emergency was on sourcing and delivering emergency food and supplies to impacted volunteers caring for native animals, wildlife search and recovery and providing additional local rescue support. During March 2022, when floods were at their peak, the WIRES Emergency Response Team attended 480 critical rescues.

In March, 2023 fires broke out in the Central West of NSW. Known as the Tambaroora fire, it destroyed more than 18,000 hectares of habitat and its severity left very few survivors.

We continue to learn from these recent significant natural disasters and the impact it has on our volunteer base. Through the deployment of Emergency Response Teams during major natural disasters we have been able to more effectively support the local volunteer base.

Speaker Abstract

Topic title

Response to ongoing climate challenges and their impacts on wildlife

Full name

Leanne Taylor - CEO

Institution, City, Country

WIRES, Australia

Content of talk

In early 2022 one of the nation's worst recorded flood disasters hit the east coast of Australia with a series of floods that impacted multiple WIRES branches.

When heavy flooding inundated Queensland, Northern NSW and Sydney in March 2022, WIRES Emergency Response Teams were quick to act. Within days of the initial downpour, the response plan was enabled. In the weeks that followed, resources were sent into the flood zone, including emergency wildlife food, first aid supplies, rescue and care equipment and replacement enclosures.

The flood crisis continued throughout 2022, with multiple regions being impacted by severe flooding later in the year. WIRES Emergency Response Teams were deployed to regional NSW in November to provide rescue support and to check on the welfare of volunteers living in flood-affected areas.

This presentation will cover:

- Initiation of March Flood Response
- WIRES Incident Management Team
- Preparation and deployment of Emergency Response Team
- Flood Impacted Rescues
- Supporting volunteers & impacted rescue organisations
- Challenges and opportunities
- Collaboration and key partnerships
- Recovery
- Riverina flood response, November 2022

Bio

Leanne is CEO of WIRES - Australia's largest wildlife rescue organisation – fulfilling this role for 13 years. She is passionate about projects and initiatives that address the issues affecting native species and their habitat. Leanne attained her Bachelor of Applied Science, Systems Agriculture at the University of Western Sydney. Having previously worked as a Senior Inspector for the RSPCA, she has also been a NSW State Emergency Management Committee member, a Committee member of the Agricultural and Animal Services Functional Area, and a delegate representing wildlife organisations on the Australian National Bushfire Recovery Agency.

Speaker Abstract

Topic title

Avian influenza

Full name

Dr Kate McInnes - Veterinarian

Institution, City, Country

DOC – Department of Conservation

Content of talk

Avian influenza is a contagious viral disease that affects domestic and wild birds and is caused by avian influenza viruses (AIV). Strains of this virus are classed as either low pathogenic LPAI (causing no/minimal illness) or highly pathogenic HPAI (causing severe illness). New strains of AIV emerge when existing strains mutate and recombine. Virus subtypes are named according to their surface proteins – hemagglutinin (H) and neuraminidase (N) – and in reference to source components.

The current H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4.b virus strain causing widespread mortality in wild birds in the northern hemisphere can be traced back to the spread of emergent A/goose/Guangdong/1/1996-like (GsGD) HPAI viruses.

Normally, HPAI outbreaks in the northern hemisphere occur in poultry in autumn and recede by spring, and are managed by eradication. However, the 2021/22 northern winter has seen more widespread distribution of outbreaks across Europe and spreading into North America, with an increased effect on wild bird populations, with reports of large mortality events in ducks, red knots, cranes, barnacle geese, northern gannets, great skuas, black vultures and others.

Waterfowl and waders are considered the natural hosts for AI viruses, and migration of these species provides a pathway for spread. Due to its geographic isolation and absence of migratory waterfowl from the northern hemisphere, Aotearoa New Zealand is considered to have a lower risk of arrival of HPAI via the migratory bird pathway. However, waders that breed in Alaska arrive here each spring via the East Asia-Australasian Flyway, including approximately 40,000 red knots, ruddy turnstones, and Pacific golden plovers, totalling approximately 40,000 birds, and 90,000 kuaka/bar-tailed godwit which fly direct from Alaska.

Mitigation of HPAI in wild birds is a complex situation. The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) is the lead agency for exotic disease outbreaks, and DOC actions focus on reducing the risk of threatened species extinction.

Readiness actions include

- Ensuring sound biosecurity/hygiene practices when working with wildlife, and reporting of unusual mortality events (via the Biosecurity NZ Exotic Pest and Disease Hotline 0800 80 99 66). To achieve this, a DOC Advisory was distributed via the Bird Banding Office, internal DOC networks, and targeted external networks to raise awareness of HPAI clade 2.3.4.4.b
- Monitoring the overseas events to identify new information on the virus characteristics, develop a list of at-risk species, and understand efficacy of mitigation actions used.
-

Response actions are dependent on the evolving situation and working with the lead agency (MPI) response. Actions might be widespread or targeted to affected locations, and may include

- Enhanced hygiene for working with at-risk species/sites, e.g. shower in/out, full PPE, and no cross-species work
- Increased monitoring to detect outbreaks early for at-risk species/sites, e.g. regular visits, or use of drone or remote camera monitoring
- Enhanced biosecurity to reduce transmission, e.g. halting translocations of wildlife, suspending wildlife rehabilitation and bird feeding, water and food treatment for captive facilities, and restriction or closure of access to certain sites
- Captive management of at-risk species as insurance populations
- Vaccination of captive at-risk species.

Bio

Kate McInnes is an Aussie import who made Aotearoa her home in 1998. She was born, raised and educated on the banks of Meanjin (Brisbane River) on Turrbal and Yuggera country where she developed a love of wildlife. Her work for DOC has taken her from live-trapping stoats, plant and bird surveys, tree climbing for mohua nest monitoring until finally combining her vet skills with conservation work in her current role as DOC Vet.

Speaker Abstract

Topic title

Avian Influenza

Full name

Craig Pritchard BVSc, MBA

Baukje Lenting BVSc, MVSc (Zoo Animal and Wildlife Health), MANZCVS (Avian Health)

Institution, City, Country

MPI

Content of talk

Since late 2021, highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) has been causing disease outbreaks in poultry and avian wildlife in the northern hemisphere with increased frequency and severity than previously recorded. HPAI has never been detected in New Zealand, but if it were to arrive, there would be significant concerns for the health of farmed and wild avian species, including endangered native wildlife.

Biosecurity New Zealand, within the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) of New Zealand, is the lead agency for biosecurity response, including for an HPAI incursion. MPI has surveillance systems in place to help detect HPAI as early as possible should it arrive in New Zealand and readiness products to allow for a swift biosecurity response.

Wildlife rehabilitators provide care for many avian species, and they therefore play an essential role in disease detection and reporting. A biosecurity response to HPAI in New Zealand would require collaboration between MPI, poultry industries, the Department of Conservation (DOC), the Ministry of Health (MOH), and other avian experts, including veterinarians and ecologists. This talk aims to re-familiarise New Zealand wildlife rehabilitators with the basic epidemiology and clinical signs of HPAI, to describe New Zealand's HPAI surveillance systems, and to advise rehabilitators on what they should do if they have a suspect case.

Bios

Craig Pritchard

Craig works in Wildlife Health Surveillance for Biosecurity, New Zealand (MPI). He started his career as a mixed animal veterinarian but, over the last 15 years, has worked predominately in the wildlife and zoo space and has gained a variety of knowledge and experience within New Zealand and abroad. Craig has enjoyed veterinary and leadership roles at the NZCCM, Auckland Zoo, Zoological Society of London and TNTK, Wellington Zoo. He enjoys applied epidemiology, conservation medicine and getting out in the field.

Baukje Lenting

Baukje has worked in small animal/exotics practice as a resident in avian, wildlife and zoo animal health at Massey University and from 2012-2022 as a vet at Wellington Zoo. She now works at MPI as a veterinarian in a team that provides scientific input to assist with preparing New Zealand for exotic diseases of livestock, feral animals and wildlife. She has a special interest in One Health and in avian, marine mammal and wildlife health.

Speaker Abstract

Topic title

Setting up a facility for a significant event

Full name

Pauline Nijman - Practice Manager, Companion Animal Hospital

Institution, City, Country

School of Veterinary Science, Massey University

Content of talk

If a significant weather event caused a high number of rescues, could your facility handle it? The function of a facility is more than a roof and walls; the facility can create order in chaos, prevent or minimise disease transmission, and enable excellent cleanliness and hygiene.

In a significant event, higher numbers of wildlife may be affected, and when you or your organisation may take higher numbers over an acute period. A facility for such a scenario should not be considered fixed; it is fluid and changes as the needs of the event and the health of the animals change. This presentation discusses basic requirements and demonstrates how a facility and response can change over time.

Bio

Pauline has extensive experience with New Zealand native wildlife in nursing and rehabilitation. Her experience includes 12 years preparation and response for oil spills, set up of a bespoke wildlife hospital and rehabilitation facility, managing a school education program, running Wildbase Avain First Aid courses, providing nursing and husbandry and much more. Pauline worked in a marine mammal zoo before spending 12 years nursing wildlife with Wildbase. Pauline is still at Massey in a different role but has retained her interest and activity in all things birds through committees and trusts and by providing professional advice on avian husbandry.

Speaker Abstract

Topic title

Fundraising Clinic

Full name

Stephanie Maitland

Institution, City, Country

Maitland and Associates – Fundraising Consultants

Content of talk

Bring your fundraising questions, draft funding applications, sample cover, ask and/or thank you letters, anything fundraising you want help with. If you're not sure where to start, what documents you may need, who to apply to, how much to ask for, then come along and lets chat. This is a practical session to get the answers and guidance you need to build, support and enhance your fundraising. Lets learn from each other.

Bio

Stephanie has been a fundraising professional for over 30 years and is currently self employed with Maitland and Associates – Fundraising Consultants. She works with charities, schools and sports organisations across New Zealand, either advising how to fundraise or doing their fundraising for them. She is a CFRE (Certified Fundraising Executive) and a Member and Fellow of the Fundraising Institute of New Zealand.

Speaker Abstract

Topic title

Management of the Poxy Bird

Full name

Dr. Janelle Ward - Wildlife Veterinarian

Institution, City, Country

Wildlife Health Solutions

Content of talk

Avian Pox virus can manifest in multiple ways and can vary in appearance depending on the location and species affected, but has several common factors to help in identification. Pox can cause mild symptoms or can be severe enough to cause death and has been implicated in mass bird mortalities and even extinction of some bird species. For this reason it is an important virus to understand and manage in the avian rehabilitation setting. In this talk you will learn the signs to look for and how to manage a bird that has suspected pox, to avoid it spreading through your facility or to other wild birds.

Bio

Dr Janelle Ward has been involved with avian health and rehabilitation since 2006 and gained her Veterinary Masters Degree in Wildlife Health in 2013.

Speaker Abstract

Topic title

Temporary animal sheltering in a disaster

Full name

Carolyn Press-McKenzie - CEO

Institution, City, Country

HUHA Helping You Help Animals Charitable Trust

Content of talk

Discussing temporary sheltering during disaster response in NZ and Oz. Sharing first-hand practical knowledge, experience, tips and considerations and emotional well-being.

Bio

Carolyn Press-McKenzie is well known as the founder and CEO of HUHA Helping You Help Animals Charitable Trust. HUHA aids and educates communities throughout NZ and works tirelessly to rescue, rehabilitate and rehome animals of varying species. Carolyn's inspired problem-solving, drive and focus has led the team of HUHA staff and volunteers to save thousands of animals from death row and also provided shelter and safe outcomes for hundreds of animals during disaster events across NZ and Australia, 36 beagles from a medical testing facility, thousands of hens from battery farms as well as ex-circus and Zoo animals, wildlife, horses, rural animals and companion animals.

The same staff and Volunteers went on to organise NZ's largest Animal Welfare protest - against party pill testing on animals, to which the law was changed. Carolyn currently heads HUHA's No Kill Animal sanctuaries north of Wellington and their compassionate referral veterinary clinic. Carolyn is a vet nurse, has trained animals for film and television, studied herbalism, and runs a business that formulates Natural products. She was the Animal Adviser on TV One's *Good Morning*, has been awarded the prestigious Assisi award, three New Zealander of the Year Local Hero Awards and is highly regarded by the animal lover community. Carolyn sits with MPI and other stakeholders on the National Animal Welfare Emergency Management Sub-Function.

Speaker Abstract

Topic title

After thirty years of egg management for New Zealand's rarest breeding shorebird, what comes next?

Full name

Catherine Francescon – Lead Senior Bird Keeper

Institution, City, Country

Auckland Zoo

Content of talk

Tara iti, the New Zealand fairy tern *(Sternula nereis davisae)*, face multiple threats; restriction to just four breeding sites, vulnerability to severe weather and tidal events, sensitivity to human disturbance, and predation by introduced mammals. With fewer than ten breeding pairs and a total population of less than 40, this is not a species that will survive, let alone thrive, without intervention.

The Department of Conservation (DOC) began managing the species in 1983, with Auckland Zoo partnering with the recovery programme since 1996. For much of that time, our role has been to provide respite for more than 150 rescued eggs that have either been abandoned or at risk of being disturbed in a weather event or king tide. Eggs were returned to a natural nest whenever possible after the threat passed or space in an active nest became available.

For the 2021/22 breeding season, management of the species became more intense, by proactively pulling eggs and hand-rearing chicks at Auckland Zoo, to then release into the wild population. This encourages pairs to re-clutch, thus bolstering numbers. Six Tara iti eggs were brought to the zoo to incubate and hand-rear artificially. Chicks remained at the zoo until around three weeks old before being moved to a pre-release aviary in Tara iti habitat. Three birds reached the point of being released from the aviary when they were starting to develop the skills of picking live fish out of deeper bodies of water. The longest a bird was known to survive post-release was three weeks, with a multitude of knowledge gathered in this time to take into future breeding seasons.

From my analysis of the circumstances and success of each Tara iti egg intervention for the past 30 years, it has been possible to recommend management techniques for improving hatching

success and, ultimately reproductive output for the population. The analysis of this data, the success in rearing chicks to release age, developing a hand-rearing manual and seeing what techniques can be improved and developed in the future gives this threatened taonga an exciting future.

The zoo's involvement in this programme has brought experience in incubation, captive rearing and bird husbandry, which can be utilised in the management of this species, thus adding another string to the bow in saving our most threatened breeding bird.

Bio

I have been a bird keeper at Auckland Zoo for the past seven years, previous to which I was on the bird team at Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, Jersey. I love seeing what can be learnt from captive populations that can then aid in securing wild populations of birds. I can often be found in the incubation room avidly watching eggs and then hand-rearing chicks, and if those chicks are then released to the wild, I feel an enormous sense of pride. Here is the story of the 2021/22 breeding season, where DOC proactively pulled Tara iti eggs to be hand-reared at Auckland Zoo and released as part of a new phase of management of the species. We are currently in the 2022/23 breeding season, where we have built on this knowledge of last year and expanded the programme further. This presentation is about how we got to 2021 and what that season entailed.

Speaker Abstract

Topic title

Working as a WIRES wildlife veterinarian - the role of a wildlife veterinarian in supporting wildlife emergency response, disease outbreak investigation and treatment

Full name

Dr Tania Bishop, WIRES Wildlife Veterinarian

Institution, City, Country

WIRES, Australia

Content of talk

Tania's presentation is about how her work as a wildlife vet evolved to working in the emergency space and supporting vets and carers in emergencies but also as support remotely for vets and carers on multiple species now through WIRES with some case studies on how that's worked.

Bio

Dr Tania Bishop - Tania Bishop is a highly dedicated Wildlife Veterinarian of 24 years with membership in Avian medicine and an industry fellow with the University of Queensland for her contribution to veterinary student mentoring in the field of zoo, wildlife and exotic animal medicine and surgery. She has also been qualified by the CPSG in developing and the facilitation of Wildlife disease risk analyses.

Tania is an expert member of the Australasian Bat Society, the Wildlife disease association, and One Health Australia and Wildlife Health Australia (being a member of the bat health focus group). She is also currently involved in the koala and the grey-headed flying-fox recovery programs.

Tania has worked across and managed the three largest wildlife hospitals in Queensland, providing emergency and intensive care, treatment, disease investigation and rehabilitation of anywhere between 10000-20000 animals per year. As well as providing veterinary support to a vast network of carers and supporting remote veterinarians to care for wildlife.

Her experience includes a range of wildlife such as birds, bats, reptiles including sea snakes and marine turtles, small mammals such as gliders and animals within the dasyurid family, koalas, and macropods, with a special interest in troubleshooting orphaned wildlife hand raising for carers.

Attending multiple disaster events in the field and in clinics alongside carers and liaising with local and state governments, her interests turned to the significant impact increasingly more common wildlife disasters are having on wildlife populations. In her role as a wildlife consultant, completing projects for both the DPIE and DES, she continued to research methods to directly mitigate deaths in disaster events, but also improve coordinated and safe responses between carers and local and state government, and increase carer and veterinary capacity to triage and manage animals in disasters from first response to release more effectively. This led to Tania writing Queensland's current policy on heat event management in flying-fox camps and the development of the first remote automated sprinkler system for use in heat events in flying-fox camps. Multiple prototypes of this design are being tested in various climatic regions across Australia.

Tania has extensive experience training and delivering lectures nationally and internationally. She is currently working for WIRES Inc developing material and resources for wildlife rehabilitators and industry professionals based on best practice and scientific research to further improve outcomes for wildlife in care throughout Australia. Her current position in WIRES is also involved in establishing wildlife hospitals in parts of Australia with minimal wildlife veterinary support, wildlife disease investigation, disaster management protocol evaluation and modification, and the associated training of carers to veterinarians required for various programs.

Speaker Abstract

Topic title

The Gough Island Restoration Programme: A Veterinary Adventure

Full name

Dr Adam Naylor - Veterinarian

Institution, City, Country

Auckland Zoo

Content of talk

Gough Island is a small uninhabited wilderness which sits roughly 1,600 miles off the coast of South Africa in the South Atlantic Ocean. It is a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the world's most important seabird nesting sites. Unfortunately, mice were introduced in the 1800s and quickly exploited the readily available food, devouring eggs and chicks alive and even attacking adult birds. With over 2 million chicks being lost annually, a rate highly likely to lead to extinction for species, including the critically endangered Tristan albatross and the MacGillivray's prion, something had to be done.

Undertaking one of the most complex island eradications ever attempted in one of the most remote and windswept parts of the world presented many challenges, especially amid a global pandemic! In February 2020, I joined a small team of conservationists from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) to make the daunting expedition to Gough for the first phase of the Gough Island Restoration Programme, an ambitious project aiming to eradicate the mice. Learn about the planning, preparation, and human resilience behind this crucial conservation project.

The Gough Island Restoration Programme is led by the RSPB and Tristan da Cunha government, supported by the UK Government, together with international partners including Island Conservation, the South African Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, BirdLife South Africa and the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland.

Bio

Adam graduated from the Royal Veterinary College, London in 2007. After working initially in referral exotic animal practice, he moved to the USA in 2011 to undertake an internship in wildlife medicine at the Wildlife Center of Virginia. This was followed by a Master's degree in Wild Animal Health at London Zoo and a second internship in Zoological Medicine at Bristol Zoo Gardens. In 2014, Adam joined the veterinary department of the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS), Edinburgh Zoo, and in 2018 he successfully passed the European and American specialist board examinations, becoming a recognised Specialist in zoo and wildlife medicine on both continents. Adam remained in Scotland for nearly nine years, providing veterinary services to RZSS Edinburgh Zoo, RZSS Highland Wildlife Park, and numerous field conservation projects based in Scotland and abroad. These included the reintroduction of Eurasian beaver to the UK and the recovery of the European wildcat in Scotland. Adam joined the Auckland Zoo veterinary team in December 2022 and hopes to combine his love of zoo medicine with his passion for native species conservation.

Speaker Abstract

Topic title

Botulism - Setting up a field triage station and managing new admissions

Full name

Lynn Miller CWR PhD

Institution, City, Country

WildWays Ltd
Whangamata
New Zealand

Content of talk

Setting up a field triage station is simple; a cover or tent, workbench, fluids and towels if a building is unavailable. Great! Now to do the job! Triaging patients and beginning the stabilisation process saves lives. How to examine each bird and assign its care plan based on the level of impact from botulism, species differences, and balancing human safety.

Bio

Lynn has over 40 years of experience rehabbing wildlife along with academic studies. Wildlife rehabilitation has been central to her life, with founding Le Nichoir in Canada in 1994, becoming an International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (IWRC) instructor over 15 years ago, joining the IWRC Board of Directors, and in 2011, becoming president of IWRC.

The work front also saw positions that included the Director of Rehabilitation for the Cape Wildlife Centre, Barnstable, MA. Director of Education, South Florida Wildlife Centre, Fort Lauderdale, FL, before returning to New Zealand as the General Manager of BirdCare Aotearoa in Green Bay, Auckland, in 2019. In 2023 new opportunities arose, and Lynn established WildWays Ltd to help train and consult with individuals and organisations in the ways of wildlife.

Speaker Abstract

Topic title

The capabilities required to better support volunteers during wildlife emergencies

Full name

Jenn Rhodes – Head of Training and Development

Institution, City, Country

WIRES, Australia

Content of talk

In an effort to better support the activation of volunteers during a major disaster and assist more animals, we have resourced a dedicated Emergency Response Team (ERT). They are trained to assist with the high volumes of urgent weekly wildlife rescues as well as disaster response. There are currently 8 Wildlife Ambulances & Emergency Responders operating nationally, 5 in NSW, 1 in QLD and 2 in TAS and conducting thousands of rescues annually. To best support the emergency response of sick, injured and orphaned native animals, WIRES rescue ambulances are fitted with a range of specialised rescue and safety equipment.

WIRES have provided emergency response training to 100+ volunteers
With thousands of weekly calls to assist wildlife in distress, WIRES ERT works closely with WIRES Rescue Office (operating 24/7), WIRES volunteers, national rescue groups, vets, wildlife hospitals and community members, to respond to the high volumes of urgent wildlife rescues and an increasing number of natural disasters.

WIRES is focused on growing our Emergency Response Team, to help meet the rising ongoing demand for wildlife rescue assistance and to increase our capability to response to major emergency events when they occur, as scientists are forecasting more frequent and more intense droughts, fires, floods, storms and heatwaves due to climate change.

This presentation will cover:

- ERT Introduction
- Emergency Rescue Responders
- Wildlife Ambulance Fleet
- ERT Rescues
- ERT Rescue Statistics
- WIRES Incident Management Plan
- Volunteer Emergency Response Teams
- ERT Training
- WIRES Emergency Response Course
- Everbridge Platform - Critical Event Management
- ERT Plans for 2023 and beyond

Bio

Originating from Auckland, New Zealand, Jenn joined the WIRES team in October 2017 and is now Head of Training and Development. Focusing on the development of courses and training materials for wildlife rehabilitators and industry professionals in Australia, Jenn and her team are responsible for researching and maintaining best practice standards for wildlife rescue, rehabilitation and release. Jenn holds a Bachelor of Science double majoring in Environmental Science and Physical Geography.

Speaker Abstract

Topic title

Bat Rehabilitation in New Zealand

Full name

Dr Janelle Ward - Wildlife Veterinarian

Institution, City, Country

Wildlife Health Solutions

Content of talk

In a natural disaster or other emergency response, there may be native bats requiring veterinary care and rehabilitation.

There are now some excellent resources available for the care of native bats in New Zealand that are freely available.

This talk will offer some tips and learnings from caring for long-tailed bats, from the initial first aid and stabilisation up to an extended period of rehabilitation.

Bio

Dr Janelle Ward has been involved with avian health and rehabilitation since 2006 and gained her Veterinary Masters Degree in Wildlife Health in 2013.

Speaker Abstract

Topic title

Triage in a significant event

Full name

Pauline Nijman - Practice Manager, Companion Animal Hospital

Institution, City, Country

School of Veterinary Science, Massey University

Content of talk

If a significant weather event caused a high number of rescues, could your facility handle it? The function of a facility is more than a roof and walls; the facility can create order in chaos, prevent or minimise disease transmission, and enable excellent cleanliness and hygiene.

In a significant event, higher numbers of wildlife may be affected, and when you or your organisation may take higher numbers over an acute period. A facility for such a scenario should not be considered fixed; it is fluid and changes as the needs of the event and the health of the animals change. This presentation discusses basic requirements and demonstrates how a facility and response can change over time.

Bio

Triage decisions in a large scale or significant event can differ from how an individual or organisation usually operate. Factors like staffing, supplies, preparedness, facilities and experience will influence triage decisions. There may be other extenuating circumstances, out of an organisations control, that determine the response. This talk will examine how external factors may influence triage decisions and how organisations or individuals may prepare for the various scenarios that can happen.

Speaker Abstract

Topic title

Applying emergency rescue experience to a rehabilitation setting

Full name

Tracie Poole - Wildlife Rehabilitation Technician

Institution, City, Country

Central Energy Trust Wildbase Recovery

Content of talk

The Massey University Veterinary Emergency Response Team (VERT) is a volunteer organisation which specialises in providing technical and veterinary rescue expertise during animal emergencies. VERT respond at local and national levels to weather disasters and large-scale or isolated rescue events. The team comprises individuals from veterinary, wildlife and other complimentary professions who are certified in rope and swift water rescue and provide veterinary aid in the field. Planning and preparation are critical to conducting a safely coordinated and efficient response.

This talk will look at steps to support emergency readiness or response in a rehab setting. This includes training, equipment familiarisation and having a plan in place for evacuation. We will also look at emphasising the importance of clear roles and responsibilities and effective communication.

By reflecting on my VERT and rehab experiences, this talk aims to highlight some transferable skills or knowledge that can be considered in rehabilitation emergency preparedness.

Bio

Tracie grew up in the Bay of Plenty, enjoying natural NZ and its wildlife. With a background in Captive Wild Animal Management, Tracie has worked directly with NZ Native birds and reptiles for over four years as a Wildlife Rehabilitation Technician for Wildbase Recovery. The purpose-built, publicly accessible facility promotes industry-leading rehab techniques, species conservation in Aotearoa and community education. Tracie's other experience involves working

with exotic birds, domestic, farm and dangerous large animals. She is a volunteer with the Massey University Veterinary Emergency Response Team as a certified rope and swift water rescue

responder, where she aids in the rescue of stranded or injured animals and enjoys pushing herself out of her comfort zone. She was recently deployed to Hawkes Bay to help with animal rescue efforts post cyclone Gabrielle, an event she will never forget, which has provided much of the material for her talk at this year's WReNNZ Conference. Tracie aims to play a role in growing the rehabilitation industry in New Zealand and looks forward to making positive connections with others through collaboration, industry development and adding to her personal experiences in NZ wildlife conservation.

Speaker Abstract

Topic title

Avian Malaria - An ongoing threat to our native species as seen in Hoiho

Full name

Rosalie Goldsworthy MNZM - Manager

Institution, City, Country

Penguin Rescue, Moeraki

Content of talk

Working with a threatened species can seem like an uphill task, so one way of managing it is to pick off as many threats as possible, one at a time, with the aim of turning the corner and helping the species to thrive.

Avian Malaria is one of these threats and at Penguin Rescue we manage it by backing up observations and case history with blood sampling. We have taken over 800 blood samples in the last 4 years.

Bio

Rosalie began rehabilitating wild birds in Days Bay, Wellington in September of 1994. Rosalie and her neighbour, Vivienne, decided to do this together and it did not take long to realise that there was a real need and they established the Eastern Bays Little Blue Penguin Foundation, as a charitable trust to help fund their work.

Their centre closed in 2001 and Rosalie moved to Moeraki to continue the work for Penguin Rescue. She rehabs mostly penguins and manages the 2 largest Yellow-eyed penguin colonies left on mainland New Zealand, which make up 30% of the population.

WReNNZ Wildlife Conference

13 AND 14 MAY 2023 AUCKLAND ZOO

"REHABBERS IN EMERGENCY RESPONSE"

Speaker Abstract

Topic title

Power of the Data

Full name

Pauline Nijman - Practice Manager, Companion Animal Hospital, Massey University

Institution, City, Country

On behalf of the WReNNZ Committee

Content of talk

The wildlife rehabilitation sector is becoming a profession worthy of governmental recognition. Opportunities for funding and support are out there but do you have the data to support your case? Do you have a robust system in place to help record trends, anecdotal observations? Can you predict the future? Can we as a collective show our impact and contribution to conservation in New Zealand?

There are online collection/patient data management systems available and WReNNZ is advocating for members to consider how shifting to such a program can help both individually and collectively, specifically WRMD (Wildlife Rehabilitation Medical Data). WRMD is a free on-line medical database designed specifically for wildlife rehabilitators to collect, manage and analyse data.

Organised, reportable data can be a powerful tool, enabling organisations to report numbers of admissions, deaths, releases, species, days in care and much, much more. Collectively, WReNNZ members would be able to pool data to provide annual statistics to both local and central government and indisputably show the costs and impacts the profession has. Standardising the way in which we record and report data can advance our knowledge and help us understand seasonal and annual trends, significant changes over time, diseases and so much more. Annual species trends can be useful in disasters and weather events for emergency planning as well as providing data for retrospective research.

Having reportable, useful data can be an incredibly powerful tool as we navigate a changing world and tougher times financially and, collectively, we can improve our professional reputation and showcase the positive impacts rehabilitators have in society.

Bio

Pauline is a member of the WReNNZ Committee. Pauline loves helping develop others in the field of native wildlife rehabilitation and learning from all members and their experiences. Pauline is keen to see members be recognised for their professionalism and willingness to work with government systems and laws to provide high standards of care to all critters great and small.