



Speech by

**Hon. WENDY EDMOND**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA**

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Hansard 12 November 1998

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Lyssavirus**

**Hon. W. M. EDMOND** (Mount Coot-tha— ALP) (Minister for Health) (9.49 a.m.), by leave: I rise to renew a public warning about the potential health risks of handling sick and injured bats and flying foxes. I urge members of the public not to attempt to pick up a sick or injured flying fox or bat because of the risk of being bitten or scratched and exposed to lyssavirus infection. I am issuing this warning and seeking the cooperation of the media in publicising it because of the seasonal factors that increase potential for accidents. At this time, female bats and flying foxes are more stressed and taking greater risks, as they have been breeding during the spring months. This means more deaths and injuries and more orphaned young animals. I am particularly concerned about children because of the attraction that animals have for them. I urge parents to warn children of all ages against picking up sick or injured animals.

Anyone finding a sick or injured animal should contact the local wildlife park, wildlife carer or the Queensland Government's National Parks and Wildlife Service. These people are specifically trained in handling and caring for injured flying foxes and bats and have been vaccinated to protect themselves against lyssavirus. Anyone who is injured handling these animals should immediately wash the wound carefully with soap and water for five minutes and contact their local GP, who will then contact the local Queensland Health public health unit. I must add that people need not be concerned about flying foxes or other bats in trees. The message to be careful only applies to directly handling sick or injured animals.

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