

# New findings reveal koalas' health risks following bushfires, will aid in future rescue efforts

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A new publication featured in [Veterinary Sciences](#) will guide future wildlife rescue and rehabilitation after Australian bushfires. These

findings provide critical information for improving koala care during subsequent fire seasons.

Natasha Speight, a Senior Lecturer at the University of Adelaide's School of Animal and Veterinary Sciences, spearheaded the study, analyzing [clinical data](#) from koalas affected by the recent Australian bushfires. Beyond generalized skin burns, the study revealed severe footpad burns, hindering koalas' tree-climbing abilities and escape from fires. The study also reported on lung damage due to [smoke inhalation](#).

"By understanding the extent of the burns of the skin in the footpads as well as furred regions of the body, koalas can be assessed for their likelihood for rehabilitation and release, or if the prognosis is poor," Speight said. "Compounding the effect of burns on the health of the koalas, a high likelihood of lung damage due to smoke inhalation has also been found by this study, and this is an important additional consideration for veterinarians triaging rescued koalas."

These findings significantly advance understanding of the impacts of bushfires on wildlife, which is crucial for future planning and care coordination.

"These resources can then be used by the government, wildlife caregivers, and veterinarians to assess the prognosis for koalas that have injuries due to bushfires, as well as aid coordination of bushfire response efforts," Speight added.

**More information:** Chloe Baek et al, Cutaneous and Respiratory Lesions in Bushfire-Affected Koalas, *Veterinary Sciences* (2023). [DOI: 10.3390/vetsci10110658](https://doi.org/10.3390/vetsci10110658)

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