



**HUMANE SOCIETY
INTERNATIONAL**



Environment, welfare groups call for ban on flying-fox killing to remain

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Major animal welfare and conservation groups today called on all political parties to commit to maintaining the current ban on killing flying-foxes for crop protection.

40 animal welfare and conservation groups have endorsed a statement supporting the ban, and calling for a stronger focus on flying-fox conservation and government assistance to encourage fruit growers to install netting. [<Link to statement>](#) and attached

The Queensland Government imposed the ban on lethal methods of flying-fox control – shooting (in 2008) and electrocution (in 2001) – after expert assessments found they were inhumane.

“Queensland Conservation urges the Liberal National Party to drop its proposal to allow fruit growers to kill flying-foxes, a move that would overturn the current ban on lethal methods and see the death of thousands of flying-foxes each year,” said Queensland Conservation spokesperson Dr Carol Booth.

“The RSPCA has advised previous Queensland governments that both electrocution and shooting of flying-foxes in orchards is inhumane. We urge all parties to maintain the current ban. Most Queenslanders abhor cruelty and would oppose the use of inhumane methods for crop protection,” said RSPCA spokesperson Michael Beatty.

“Bats are Australian native animals and they play a vital role in pollinating and dispersing seeds of our beautiful forests. Sometimes they can cause problems for people. There are many ways these problems can be resolved, shooting bats isn't a rational solution. Not only is it inhumane, it's inefficient and doesn't work, said Australasian Bat Society president Michael Pennay.

“Spectacled and Grey-headed flying-foxes are nationally threatened species. Any future Queensland Government should be focused not on killing threatened species but on recovering flying-fox populations and supporting their capacity to pollinate and disperse the seeds of native plants,” said Wildlife Queensland spokesperson Des Boyland.

“Cruelty to animals is inexcusable. Expert assessments of shooting in Queensland, by the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, and in NSW by an independent Flying Fox Review Panel, both of which included representatives from the farming community, have concluded that shooting flying-foxes in

orchards is inhumane and unacceptable ethically and legally,” said Humane Society International spokesperson Alexia Wellbelove.

There is a high rate of wounding in orchards. Autopsies conducted on 58 flying-foxes shot in a NSW orchard found that the majority died slowly over periods of hours or days as a result of shotgun wounds. <[Link to report](#)>

An inevitable consequence of killing flying-foxes is that dependent young will be orphaned and starve to death over several days. The ripening of most orchard fruit coincides with the birth and care of young in three species.

“Wildlife rescue groups dread the return of shooting or electrocution. The rescue and care of injured and orphaned flying-foxes will greatly increase the burden on volunteer groups already struggling to care for immense numbers of flying-fox orphans and those injured from barbed wire, powerlines, loose netting and illegal killing,” said Bats Conservation and Rescue Qld President Louise Saunders.

“Flying-foxes are celebrated by many Queenslanders for their amazing natural history, and the vital ecological role they play of pollination and seed dispersal. Australia’s east coast is the only place in the world where urban residents can live with three flying-foxes species. 2011-2012 was declared by the United Nations as the Year of the Bat. We hope it will not also be the year that Queensland returns to killing flying-foxes,” said Dr Booth.

“The majority of fruit growers now use responsible methods of crop protection. Nets are the only consistently effective method of crop protection and also protect against birds. Unfortunately, the minority who remain unprotected could kill many thousands of flying-foxes a year. This tarnishes the image of other fruit growers who are doing the right thing by wildlife,” said Mr Boyland.

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Image options:

A range of photos and video footage are available for use by media: phone 0448 868 984 (and check on this [website](#) for options). There is also the option of taking footage of injured and orphaned flying-foxes in care: phone 0425 734008.