

Should I offer backyard quenda (bandicoots) food?

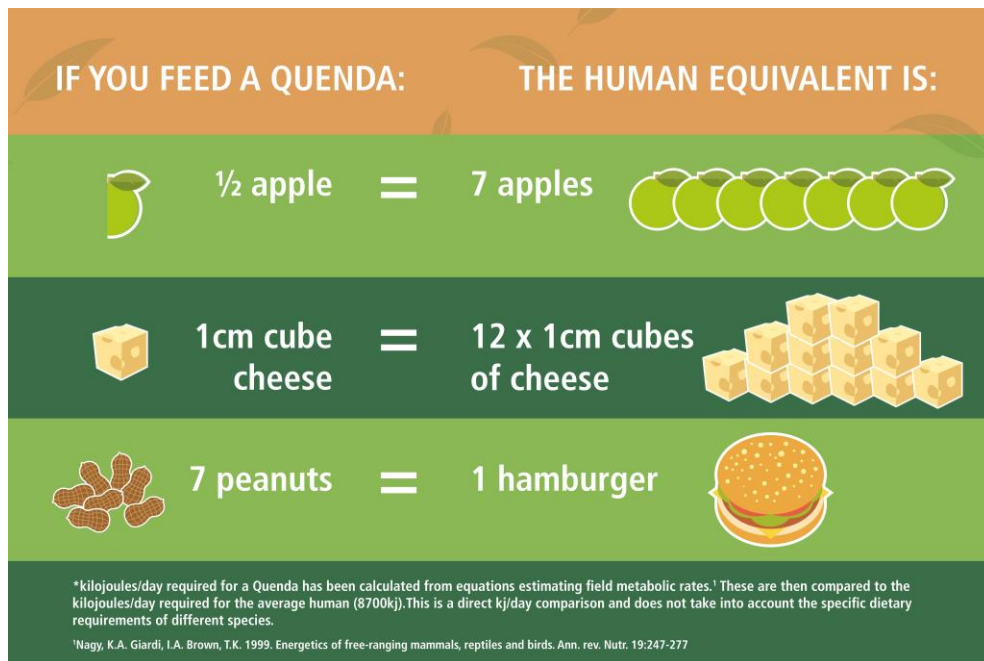
Offering backyard quenda food is not recommended.

Quenda have successfully adapted to the urban environment and it is often tempting to provide food for our backyard residents. However, by feeding native animals we may be doing more harm than good. Providing non-natural food sources to native animals can lead to **nutritional imbalances**, increase the **spread of disease**, and result in **negative influences on animal behaviour** and the natural population dynamics.

Nutritional imbalances

Human food is not natural for quenda and **can make them sick**. Quenda naturally eat plant tubers, bugs and fungi. Native animals love our food sources which are easy to get and often plentiful, however too much of a good thing can be bad. Nutritional imbalances may lead to **obesity** and other **life threatening complications**.

Even providing 'healthier' food options can be dangerous. Remember quenda are much smaller than the average human so even small portions of human food can be very unhealthy for them. Along with health risks from a bad diet, overweight animals are less able to evade predators.





Foods such as cake, bread and cookies are providing none of the nutritional requirements these animals need on a daily basis. Giving these animal cooked bones is also not recommended as these do not digest properly and may cause serious life threatening complications.

Spread of Disease

Offering foods such as raw meat can expose animals to **parasitic disease** such as the potentially fatal parasite *Toxoplasma gondii*. If numerous animals are feeding from the one feeding station the risk of **disease transmission** between them is much greater.

Disrupting natural behaviour

With a constant supply of 'easy' human food backyard quenda are at risk at becoming less capable and adaptable foragers and **dependent on humans for food**. If the human feeder goes on holiday or moves away the dependent backyard marsupials may be unable to adapt back to successful foraging.

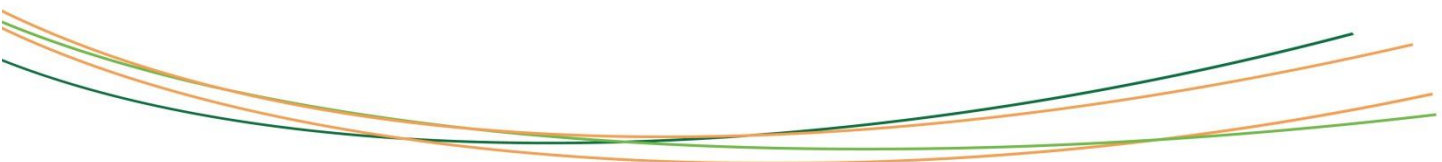
Providing food may attract more animals to that area abnormally increasing the population density of within your area. Increased density of animals can result in **increased aggression and transmission of infectious diseases**, posing a greater health risk for the local quenda population.

Feeding marsupials may also result in them **losing their fear of humans**, and as a result make them **more vulnerable to abuse** by other people and in closer contact with household pets i.e. cats and dogs.

What can I do instead to help quenda living in my garden?

There are plenty of things you can do to assist quenda living in your garden, **to encourage their presence without the risk of causing them harm**.

- Ensure they are safe from pets on your property
 - Keep cats indoors, or confined to outdoor enclosures.
 - Provide a "dog free" area of your garden into which quenda can escape. Use **ring-lock fencing** to separate parts of the yard with dense vegetation, as a refuge for quenda.
- Plant **plenty of low lying, dense vegetation around your garden** to provide shelter and assist their natural food sources.
- Avoid using poisons such as snail bait and rat bait – both of which can be fatal to quenda.
 - If using snail baits, use iron EDTA (this may still make quenda sick, but is less likely to cause death).
 - If using bait, place it in areas at least 1m off the ground that are not accessible to quenda.
 - Use cages for the bait that allow access to snails but not quenda.



- **“Wildlife proof” ponds and pools**
 - Use pool covers.
 - Ensure there is an escape route if a quenda falls in – e.g. bricks placed on the top step of a pool, or a sturdy stack of bricks onto which a quenda can climb to get out of a pond.
- **Do not remove quenda from your property and release them elsewhere.** This is illegal (*Wildlife Conservation Act, 1950*). Few quenda survive after being moved in this way.

We do not recommend feeding backyard quenda. However, if you choose to you should aim to minimise the risk of harm:

- Completely avoid unhealthy (and potentially life-threatening) foodstuffs such as **bread, cakes and biscuits, raw meat and cooked bones.**



Bread



**Baked
goods**



**Raw
meat**



**Cooked
bones**

- Offer **very small portions** of safer foods, and **not everyday.**
 - **Mealworms are the safest option** for quenda, as they most closely resemble one of their primary natural food sources – provide small quantities such as one mealworm per quenda every third day.
- Offer food in ways that **minimises the risk of harm.**
 - Offer food at varying locations, amongst dense vegetation to help quenda escape from predators such as cats and foxes. Feeding quenda at consistent location every day may result in predators recognising the location as a quenda “aggregation point”. **Predators can use such knowledge to hunt quenda more effectively.**
 - Additionally, “aggregation points” can become heavily contaminated with quenda faeces, and may cause **outbreaks of infections** which can make quenda sick.