



Marion Scrymgour
MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

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Baby Quolls at the Territory Wildlife Park

Environment Minister Marion Scrymgour today urged Territorians to be on the look out for native northern quolls under threat by toxic cane toads.

Ms Scrymgour said the NT Government is committed to helping fight the fight against the cane toad, and as well as investing hundreds of thousands of dollars, has also pioneered programs designed to protect animals under threat.

“The Territory has committed \$300,000 alone to establishing the “island ark” project to protect threatened species such as the northern quoll, by moving them to island sanctuaries,” Ms Scrymgour said.

“And the Territory Wildlife Park is taking part in a captive breeding program that aims to secure future generations and save the species from extinction.

“Northern quolls are the largest predatory marsupial in the Top End which leads them to be especially susceptible to cane toad poisoning,” she said.

Ms Scrymgour said the public can help the program by notifying the Park as to where quolls might be.

“Staff will go to where the quolls are and assess them to ensure they are suitable for the breeding program,” she said.

“The northern quoll is the size of a small cat and is distinguished by its dark brown fur and white spots.

She said this time of year is a good opportunity for people to be on the look out for quolls in the wild because they were more likely to be out and about as the young are dispersing.

“Last year members of the public alerted us to quolls in McMinn Street in the City and the suburb of Karama,” Ms Scrymgour said.

“The city is probably the last strong-hold for the quolls, because cane toads are yet to reach the area.”

“We have 21 pairs of quolls at this stage of the breeding program, but require about 30 pairs to establish and maintain a genetically viable captive population the Park.

“The joeys’ of the first year of the quoll breeding program at the park have now emerged from the mothers pouch and are starting to eat solid food, such as insects.”

Ms Scrymgour said part of the species vulnerability stems from its unique breeding model where the males often die after one breeding season and females rarely breed more than once so if one generation is lost there may not be replacement breeders.

“New founders to the current breeding population at the TWP are essential to establish genetic diversity,” she said.

“The captive population will also be very valuable in contributing to the limited amount of knowledge on the breeding biology of this species.

“The TWP breeding program has been successful to date with 90 per cent of pairings resulting in offspring.”

Ms Scrymgour said the Territory Wildlife Park is playing a lead role in the breeding program that was initiated in 2005 with strong support and assistance coming from the Department of Natural Resources Environment and the Arts.

Territorians can contact the Territory Wildlife Park on 8988 7200 if they know where northern quolls could be located.

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