

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Healthy Wombats

Dr Julie Old and Mr Jack Wolfenden from the School of Natural Sciences have received funding from the Emirates Hotels (Australia) Pty. Ltd., to undertake research that will lead to the treatment and conservation of wombats suffering with sarcoptic mange.

'The Wolgan Valley and Carne Creek catchments are home to a range of native animals including the common wombat (*Vombatus ursinus*)', explains Dr Old. 'Some of the animals in this area appear in very poor health, suggesting high infestations of the parasitic mite *Sarcoptes scabiei* which in extreme cases can lead to blindness and deafness. Previous research has demonstrated that the prevalence of sarcoptic mange increases during drought or winter, when there is little feed available or following habitat degradation.

Focussing primarily on the immediate vicinity of the Wolgan River and Carne Creek, this study will identify the occurrence of wombat burrows using area grid searches confirmed via global positioning system coordinates. This information will be entered into a Geographic Information System (GIS) to register the location of the wombat burrows. Wombats identified as suffering from mange will be treated and monitored throughout their recovery. Infra red cameras will be fixed at strategic points near the burrows so that the researchers can study the behaviour of wombats with and without mange.



The results of this research will contribute to ongoing efforts to improve the health and well-being of a significant member of Australia's native fauna. The project will also develop and increase the skills of undergraduate students by providing them relevant field experience.

Project Title: Taking action to improve Wombat health on the Emirates Estates Wolgan Resort Conservation Reserve

Funding has been set at: \$15,765

Contact Details: j.old@uws.edu.au

http://www.uws.edu.au/dr_julie_old

December 2010