

NEWS

Wildlife specialists investigate poisoning of crows in Cleveland

By Lyn Uhlmann

WILDLIFE experts are investigating the deaths of five birds found outside Redland City Council Chambers in Cleveland this week.

The experts are caring for a further three birds believed to have been poisoned after meat, suspected of being a bait, was found on top of a dumpster in the council's Doig Street car park on Tuesday.

Council staff arriving for work yesterday morning found the eighth sick bird outside the Bloomfield Street office front door.

Seven of the birds, all showing signs of poisoning, were crows. The first sick bird, a black-faced cuckoo shrike, was found on Thursday, June 16.

Pelican and Seabird Rescue vice-president Nat Forrest, of Gumdale, said she believed the birds were poisoned.

"It started last Thursday when a little black-faced cuckoo shrike came in showing some kind of toxicity," Nat said.

"When it's a one-off occurrence, it doesn't ring alarm bells, but all the bells started going

off this week when on Monday we got a call for a crow in the same area.

"It crash landed out of the sky and couldn't stand.

"Then on Tuesday another crow fell and, although it was still alive, it was unable to stand.

"Near it was a dead one.

"Some minced meat was found on the top of a dumpster in the car park.

"It smelled funny and we took it to the vet with the birds and they suspected the mince had been poisoned," Nat said.

Brisbane Bird and Exotics Vet Service veterinarian Dr Deborah Monks, who tended to the birds, also said she believed they had been poisoned.

"Some mince had been found nearby and it had a turpentine smell to it," she said.

"I don't know if it was turpentine in fact, but it didn't smell like mince should smell."

Dr Monks said the living birds showed signs of poisoning and necropsies of the dead birds revealed enlarged livers in all of them.

"Poisoning would cause enlarged livers, as the liver is responsible for filtering toxins," she said.

Dr Monks said the living birds were treated with fluids and activated charcoal, but she was unable to comment on their outlook.

"It's a day-by-day situation," she said.

Council chief executive officer Gary Stevenson said the council was



RESCUE MISSION: Pelican and Seabird Rescue vice-president Nat Forrest with crows that are thought to have been poisoned in Cleveland this week.

Photo: **Chris McCormack**

aware of the situation and was investigating.

"At this stage, it is not clear whether the incident was a result of malice," he said.

"Council takes the matter of animal welfare very seriously.

"All native wildlife is protected by the State Government under the Nature Conservation Act, which identifies it is a prosecutable offence to intentionally injure or

kill any native fauna.

"The Department of Education, Economic Development and Innovation's Animal Care and Protection Act also promotes the care and treatment of animals, under which the RSPCA has successfully prosecuted offenders."

Nat said although some people might not like a certain type of animal, "that doesn't give them a right to make a

decision on whether that life should continue or end."

"Imagine if a child had picked up and eaten that mince," she said.

Nat said the incident had been reported to police and also to the RSPCA.

Anyone with information about the dead birds can contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or visit crimestoppers.com.au