

Don't Snag the Shags!

Shags are native residents of New Zealand most frequently seen near water often spreading their wings and basking in the sunshine. There are 36 species of Shag in the world, 12 are found in New Zealand, and 8 of them are endemic here.

ARRC commonly attends to shags with leg and wing injuries or occasionally poisoning and these birds are hardy and usually successfully rehabilitated. Shags are real characters and quickly get used to being fed and cared for during rehabilitation. They have very sharp beaks though and can inflict serious injuries so they need to be handled with care.

Unfortunately ARRC often has to provide medical care for these beautiful birds when they have fishing line wrapped around their wings, occasionally with heavy sinkers attached and hooks that are either embedded in their flesh or have been swallowed. Some of these birds have been in this condition for at least a few days and are in a poor way.

Fishing tackle can easily cause severe injury to our native wildlife (and our pets as well) and sadly many of these birds suffer terribly and need to be euthanised. There are a few however that we anaesthetise, remove the fishing tackle, treat their wounds and eventually release them back into the wild.

Here's what you can do to help prevent injury to our seabirds and pets with fishing tackle:

- When fishing, look after your fishing gear making sure it is not left unattended
- Dispose of unwanted fishing tackle responsibly
- If you see a bird with fishing line attached, it will most likely need to be caught and attended to. For guidelines on how to do this have a look at www.rrc.org.nz or give DOC or ARRC a ring on 579 9115.



Charlie's lucky escape

There have been four recent instances of cats being attacked by two or three roaming dogs in the Maungatapu area. The attacks happened in the middle of the night or at 5am on Maungatapu Road properties within a few hundred meters of each other. Three of the cats sadly died soon after being attacked, the other made a full recovery.

Charlie had many bite marks and his leg was wrenched with enough force to pull the hip out of its socket. Thankfully, a neighbour had interrupted the very noisy attack before more fatal damage could occur. Charlie's hip was put back in place and he made a full recovery, though he was very weak for a few days.

If anyone knows of roaming dogs, they should contact the Tauranga City Council when they are seen. It's important to remember that these dogs could potentially pose a risk to people as well. Not all roaming dogs of course are out to maim and kill and the Council will always make every effort to ensure the best possible outcome for dogs and owners.

Be cautious of any dog involved in a fight or during attack and definitely don't reach in with your hands to try and break it up; We see a lot of pet owners injured doing just that. As in Charlie's case, a sudden very loud YELL may be sufficient to stop the attack.

Often, when an owner and pet have been injured, they will choose to take their pet for veterinary attention before they take themselves for medical attention; even if their injuries are worse than the dog or cat! Interesting how people will frequently put their pet before themselves!

By the Welcome Bay Vet Team

We write for the Bay Waka to sharing interesting and important veterinary stories and information with our community.

Editor's note: Witnesses to the dog attacks in Maungatapu have described three dogs, two being Pit Bull size and appearance (one larger dark colour and one lighter or tan) and a larger dog again; whose colour was not identified. If you want to anonymously report these dogs, feel free to phone Bay Waka in Tauranga on 262-1000, or email editor@baywaka.nz.



Charlie the cat, relaxing at home after using up one of his nine lives.



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