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# WOMBATS IN THE WARDROBE

‘Half the people in Australia own a wombat or have a nodding acquaintance with one – and the other half want to,’ wrote one wombat owner. He had found, as many have found before and since, that wombats are very special animals; and while he exaggerates the case, it is true that an increasing number of wombats are finding their way into human homes and lives. Most of them result from road kills; when a wombat or other marsupial is killed on the road there is always the chance that it is a female with young in the pouch, and more and more motorists are becoming aware of this possibility. The result is that many orphan marsupials are being rescued and hand-reared by humans.

By law, all orphan marsupials should be taken to the appropriate wildlife authority, whose officers will send them either to established wildlife refuges or to individuals they know to be competent – and willing – to care for them until they are ready to be returned to the wild. This is not always done, however, and often people who are well intentioned but ignorant of the special needs of young marsupials attempt to rear them. (See Appendix 2: Hand-rearing orphan wombats.)