



# *Care For Us*

Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*)

# Animal Welfare

Animal welfare refers to an animal's state or feelings. An animal's welfare state can be positive, neutral or negative.

An animal's welfare has the potential to differ on a daily basis. When an animal's needs - nutritional, behavioural, health and environmental - are met, they will have a good standard of welfare.

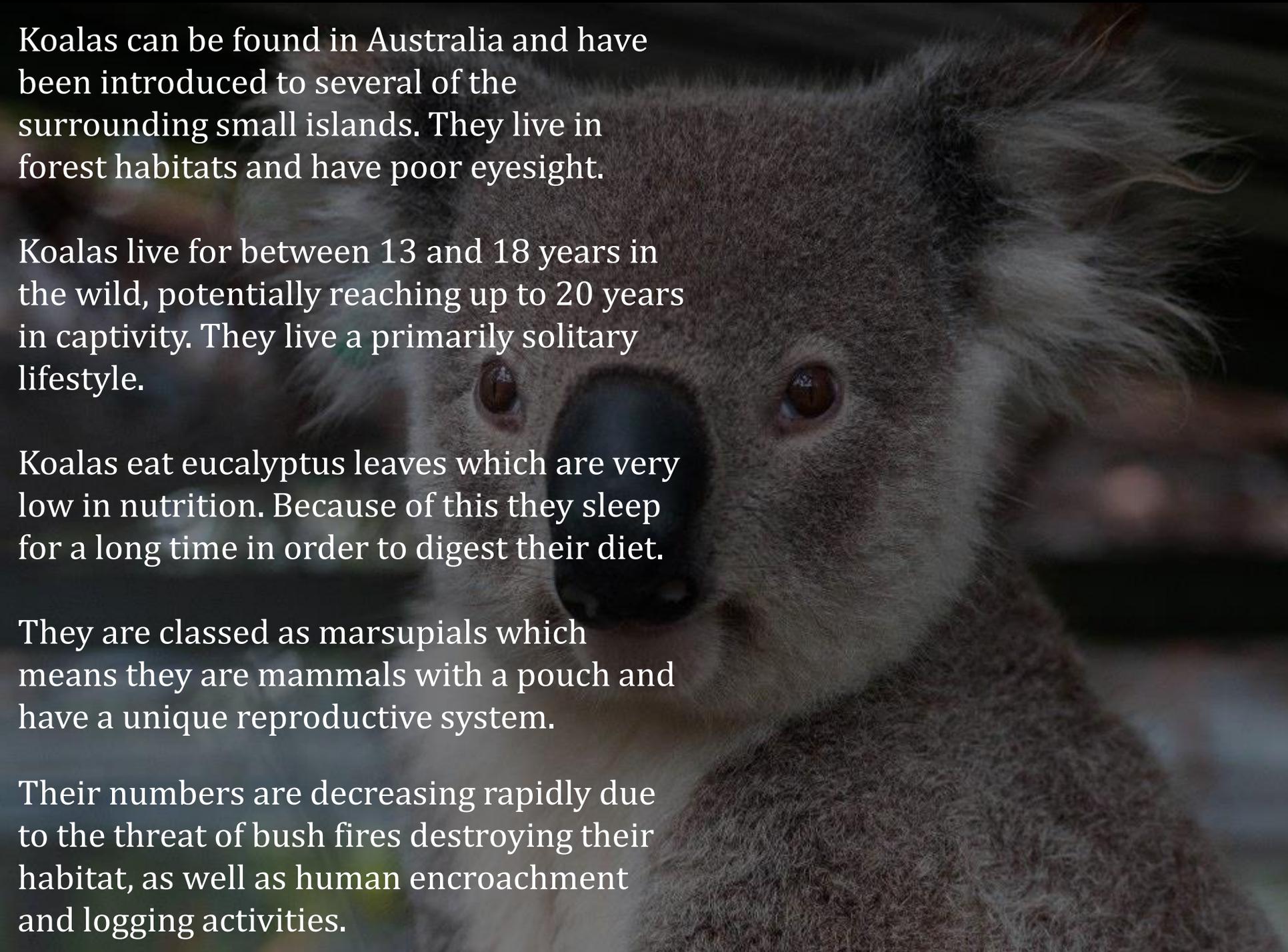
A good life in captivity might be one where animals can consistently experience good welfare - throughout their entire life.





Understanding that animals have both sentient and cognitive abilities as well as pain perception, reinforces the need to provide appropriate husbandry provisions for all captive animals, to ensure positive welfare.

In captivity, the welfare of an animal is dependent on the environment provided for them and the daily care and veterinary treatment they receive.



Koalas can be found in Australia and have been introduced to several of the surrounding small islands. They live in forest habitats and have poor eyesight.

Koalas live for between 13 and 18 years in the wild, potentially reaching up to 20 years in captivity. They live a primarily solitary lifestyle.

Koalas eat eucalyptus leaves which are very low in nutrition. Because of this they sleep for a long time in order to digest their diet.

They are classed as marsupials which means they are mammals with a pouch and have a unique reproductive system.

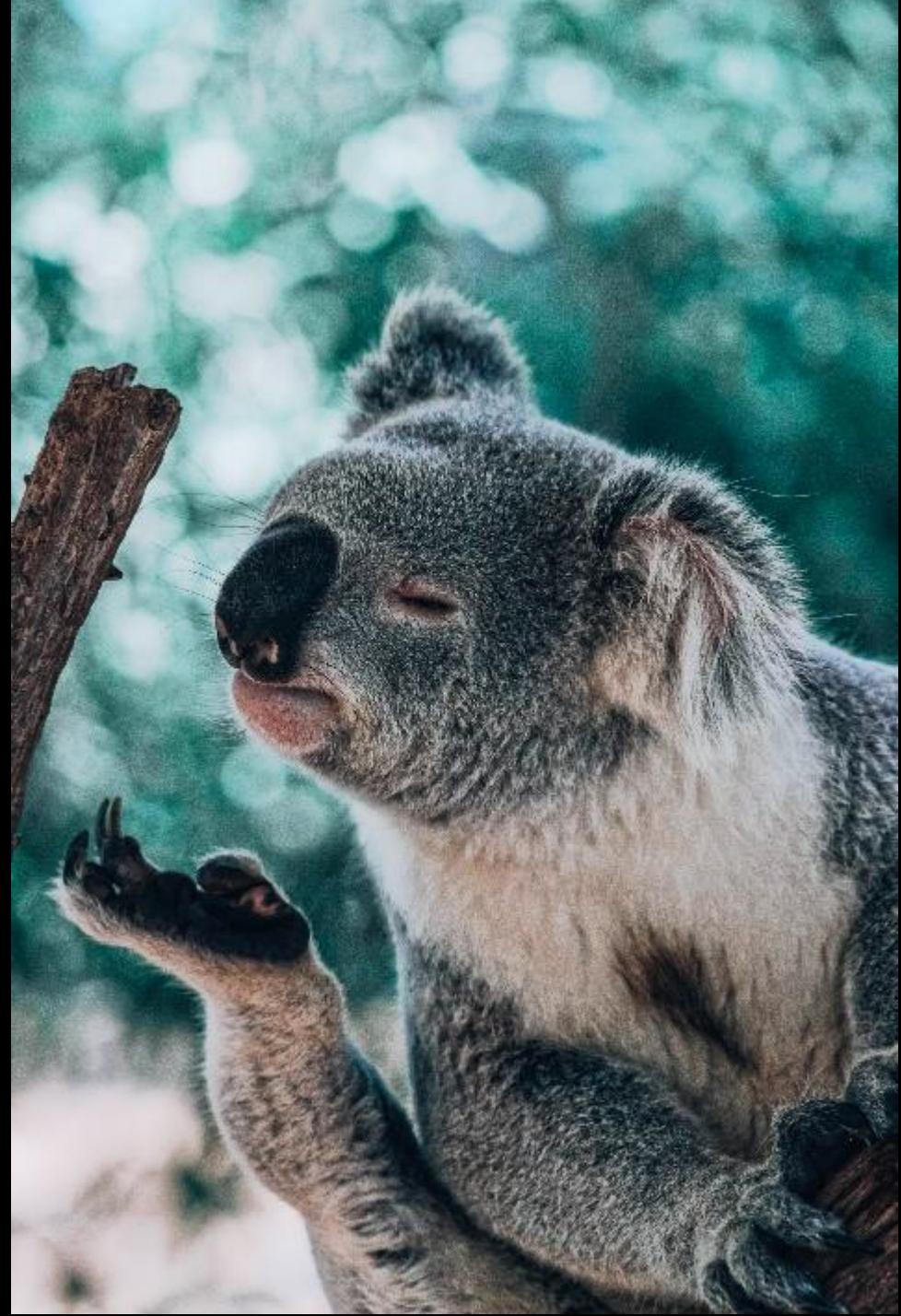
Their numbers are decreasing rapidly due to the threat of bush fires destroying their habitat, as well as human encroachment and logging activities.

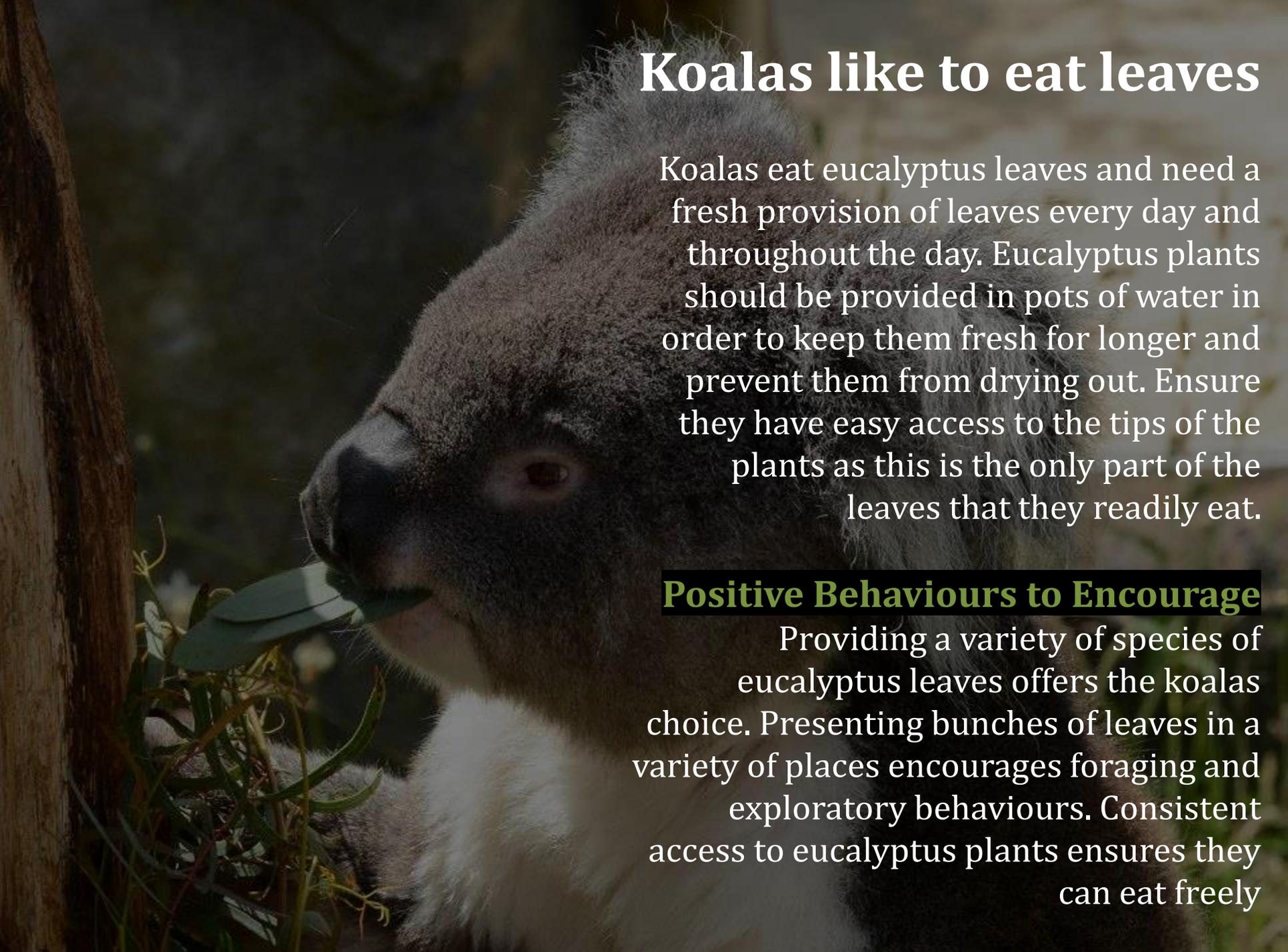
# Koalas like specific environments

Koalas benefit from a habitat that closely resembles what they experience in the wild. They are sensitive to surrounding noise, temperatures and lighting. Their environment should have lighting which resembles wild light cycles and temperatures of around 22°C. UV exposure once or twice a week ensures healthy bone growth. Substrates can be used on floors to ensure a soft landing if they should fall. This should be changed regularly to prevent bacterial build up.

## **Positive Behaviours to Encourage**

Exploring a large enclosure freely (with access to trees and ground) and experiencing naturalistic heating and lighting levels.



A close-up photograph of a koala clinging to a tree trunk and eating eucalyptus leaves. The koala's grey fur is visible, and its large, dark nose is prominent as it chews on a green leaf. The background is a soft-focus natural setting.

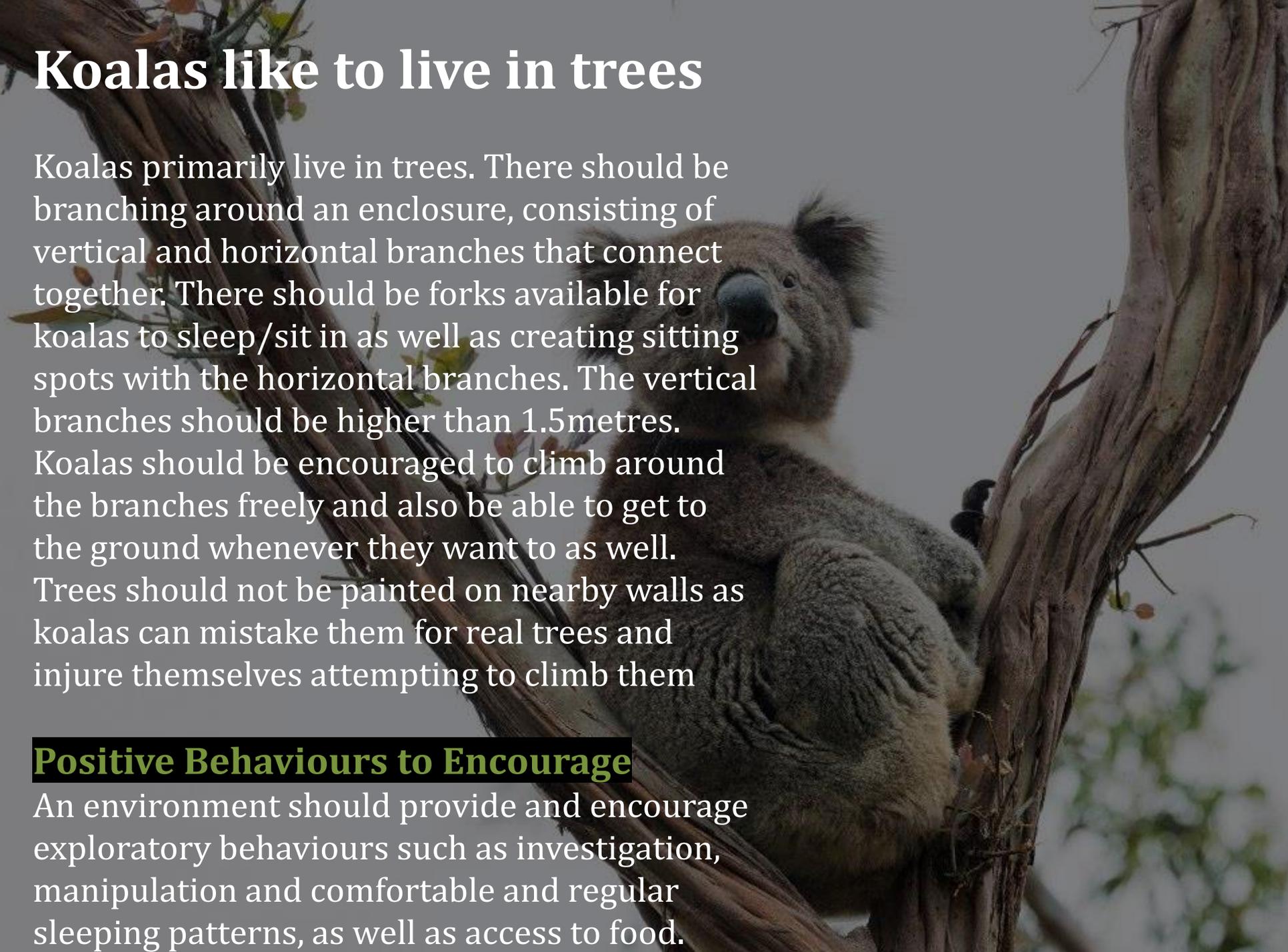
# Koalas like to eat leaves

Koalas eat eucalyptus leaves and need a fresh provision of leaves every day and throughout the day. Eucalyptus plants should be provided in pots of water in order to keep them fresh for longer and prevent them from drying out. Ensure they have easy access to the tips of the plants as this is the only part of the leaves that they readily eat.

## **Positive Behaviours to Encourage**

Providing a variety of species of eucalyptus leaves offers the koalas choice. Presenting bunches of leaves in a variety of places encourages foraging and exploratory behaviours. Consistent access to eucalyptus plants ensures they can eat freely

# Koalas like to live in trees

A koala is shown clinging to a tree trunk, looking towards the camera. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey, suggesting a natural outdoor setting.

Koalas primarily live in trees. There should be branching around an enclosure, consisting of vertical and horizontal branches that connect together. There should be forks available for koalas to sleep/sit in as well as creating sitting spots with the horizontal branches. The vertical branches should be higher than 1.5 metres. Koalas should be encouraged to climb around the branches freely and also be able to get to the ground whenever they want to as well. Trees should not be painted on nearby walls as koalas can mistake them for real trees and injure themselves attempting to climb them

## **Positive Behaviours to Encourage**

An environment should provide and encourage exploratory behaviours such as investigation, manipulation and comfortable and regular sleeping patterns, as well as access to food.

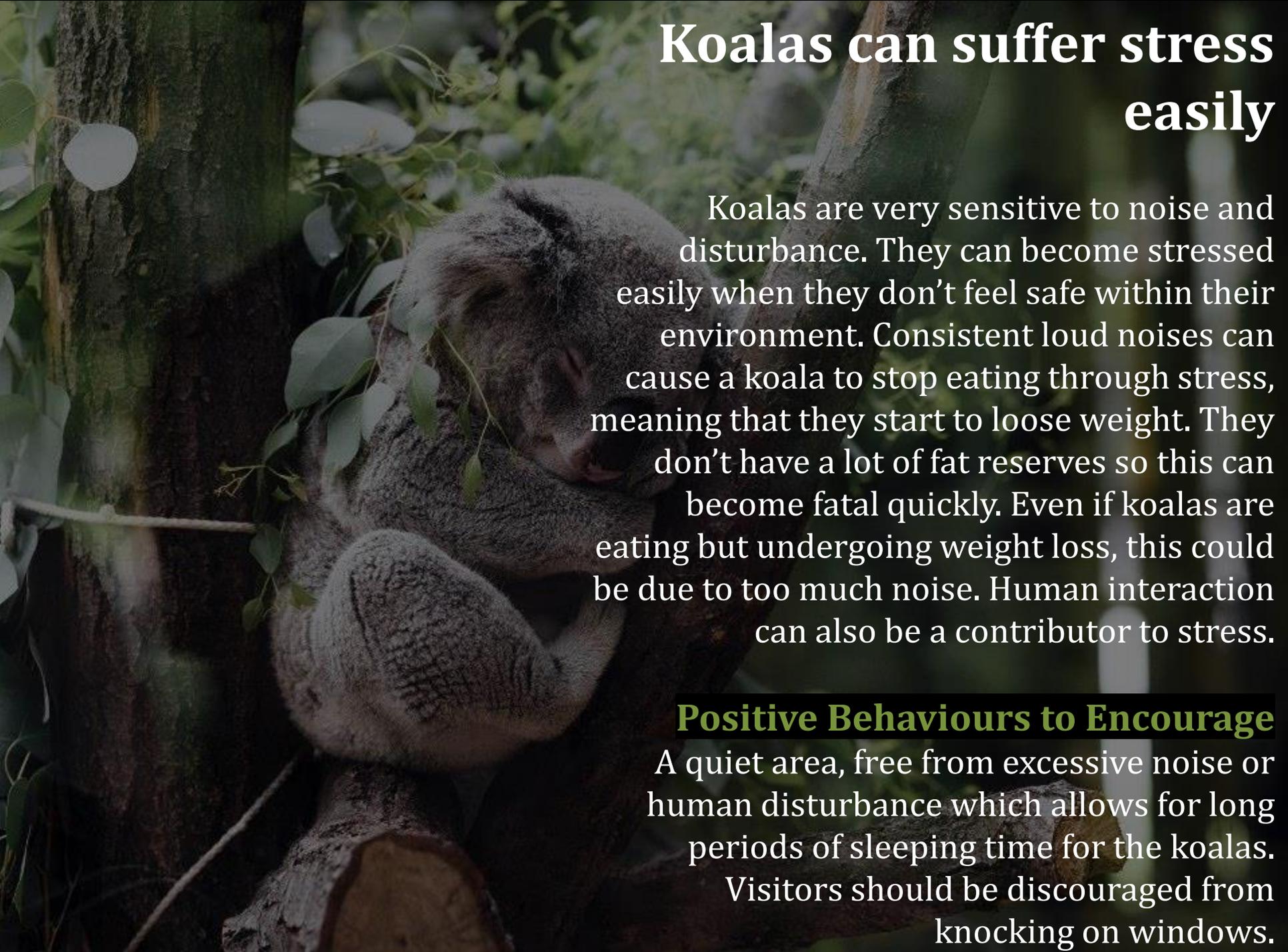
# Koalas require specific health care

Claws should be clipped (every month or two) because they can quickly become overgrown and impact their climbing and walking abilities. Fur should be brushed occasionally, especially during their moult to remove excessive fur. Koalas should also be weighed weekly to make sure that their weights are consistent as sudden weight loss in koalas can be fatal and indicate environmental stress.

## **Positive Behaviours to Encourage**

Providing trees to climb to wear down nails naturally is advised. Partaking in positive reinforcement training for voluntary weighing and claw clipping will reduce stress levels during these procedures.



A koala is shown clinging to a tree trunk, its body pressed against the bark. The koala's fur is a mottled grey-brown, and its limbs are wrapped around the tree. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting a forest environment. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

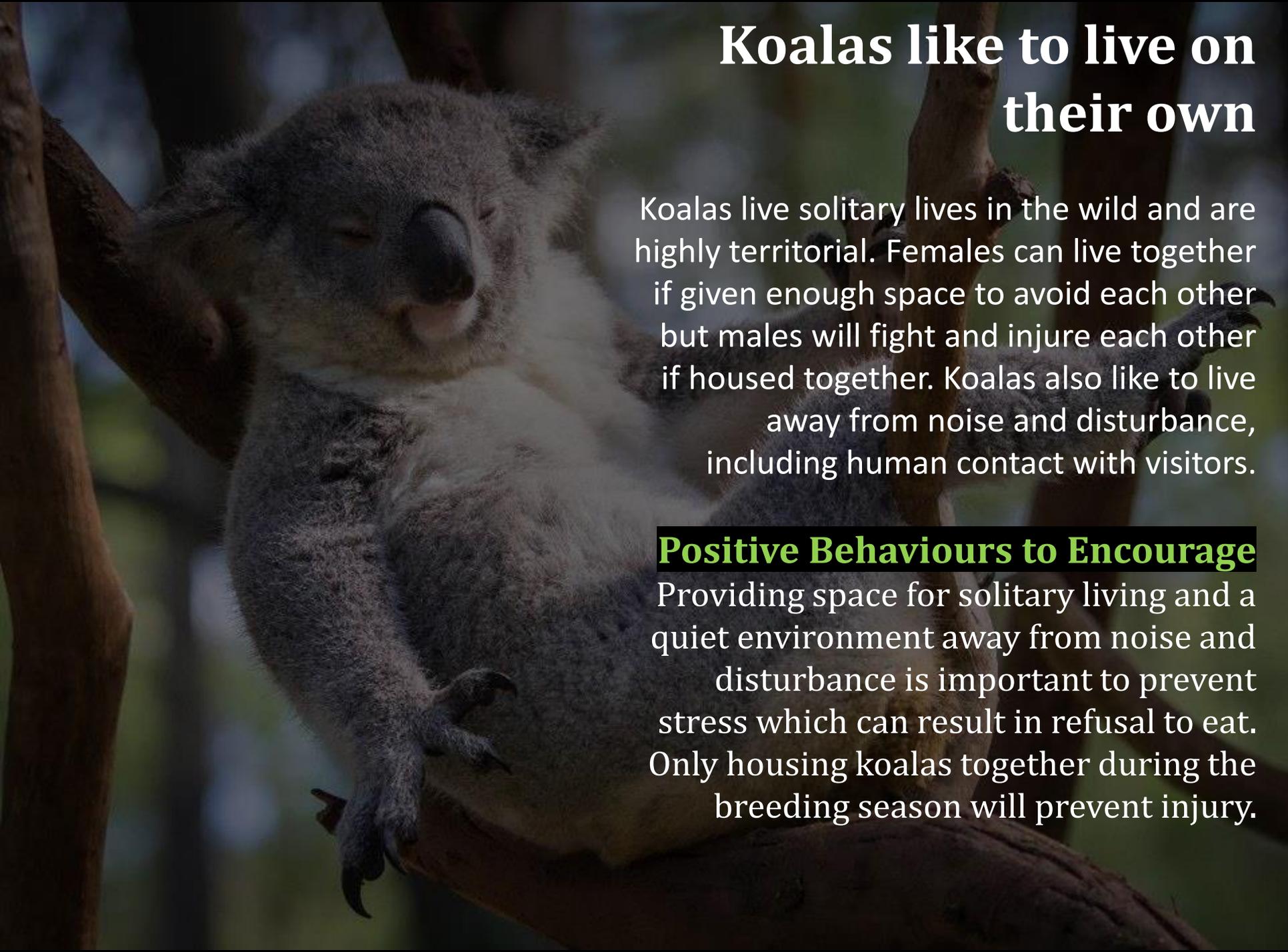
# Koalas can suffer stress easily

Koalas are very sensitive to noise and disturbance. They can become stressed easily when they don't feel safe within their environment. Consistent loud noises can cause a koala to stop eating through stress, meaning that they start to lose weight. They don't have a lot of fat reserves so this can become fatal quickly. Even if koalas are eating but undergoing weight loss, this could be due to too much noise. Human interaction can also be a contributor to stress.

## **Positive Behaviours to Encourage**

A quiet area, free from excessive noise or human disturbance which allows for long periods of sleeping time for the koalas.

Visitors should be discouraged from knocking on windows.

A close-up photograph of a koala clinging to a tree branch. The koala is the central focus, with its grey, woolly fur and large black nose clearly visible. It is positioned on the left side of the frame, with its body extending towards the right. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a forest environment. The lighting is natural, highlighting the texture of the koala's fur and the bark of the tree.

# Koalas like to live on their own

Koalas live solitary lives in the wild and are highly territorial. Females can live together if given enough space to avoid each other but males will fight and injure each other if housed together. Koalas also like to live away from noise and disturbance, including human contact with visitors.

## **Positive Behaviours to Encourage**

Providing space for solitary living and a quiet environment away from noise and disturbance is important to prevent stress which can result in refusal to eat. Only housing koalas together during the breeding season will prevent injury.

# Koalas enjoy

A suitable environment that promotes all their natural behaviours, a selection of eucalyptus leaves to eat and quiet places for sleeping and resting.

In captivity we should always try and replicate their natural and normal behaviours, so they are happy and healthy throughout their lives.

