



*Care For Us*  
Kangaroos and Wallabies  
*(Macropodidae)*

# 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.

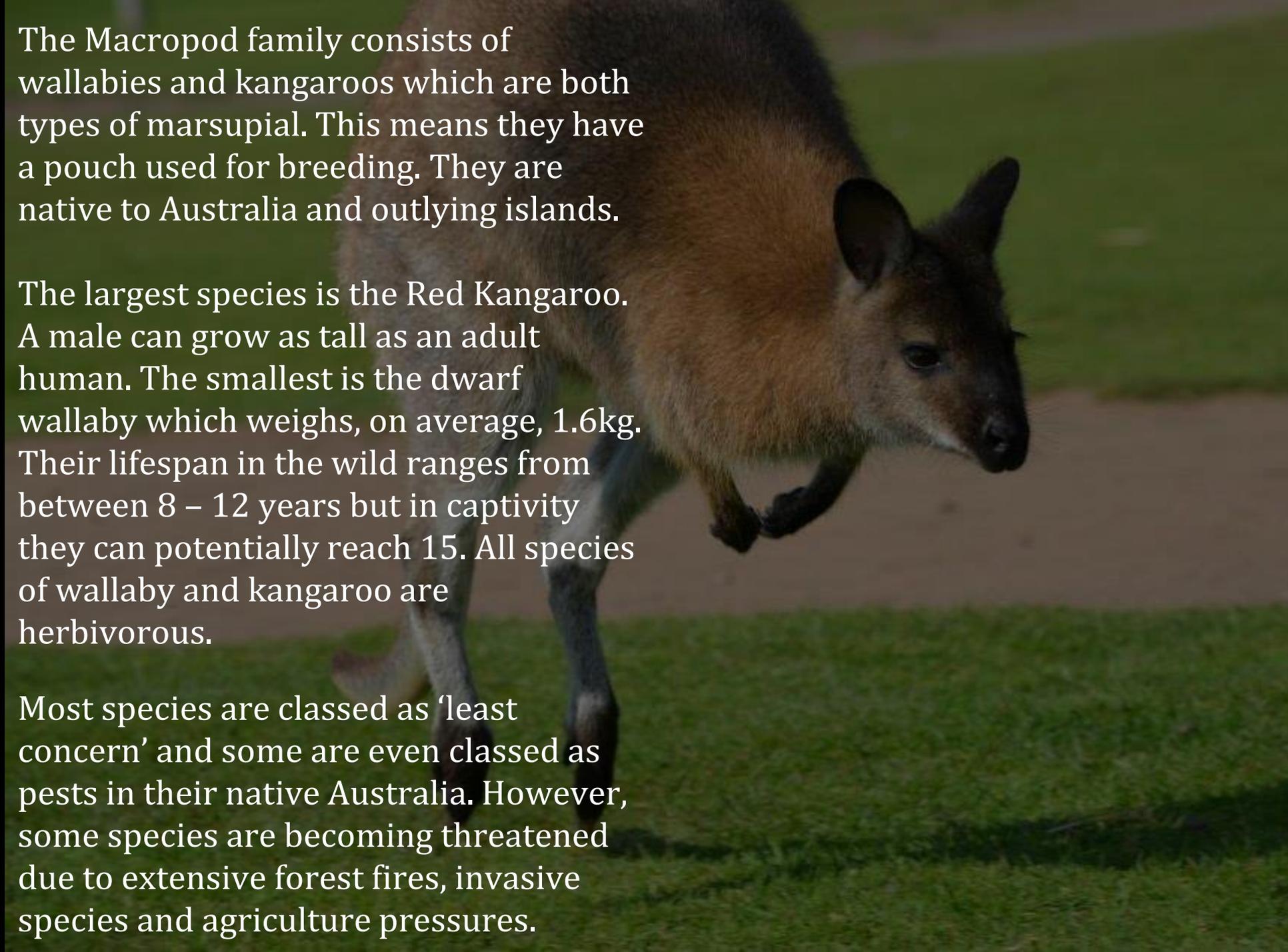
A good life in captivity might be one where animals can consistently experience good welfare - throughout their entire life.





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.

A photograph of a wallaby running across a green grassy field. The wallaby is captured in mid-stride, moving from left to right. Its fur is a mix of brown and grey, and its ears are pointed forward. The background is a soft-focus green field.

The Macropod family consists of wallabies and kangaroos which are both types of marsupial. This means they have a pouch used for breeding. They are native to Australia and outlying islands.

The largest species is the Red Kangaroo. A male can grow as tall as an adult human. The smallest is the dwarf wallaby which weighs, on average, 1.6kg. Their lifespan in the wild ranges from between 8 – 12 years but in captivity they can potentially reach 15. All species of wallaby and kangaroo are herbivorous.

Most species are classed as 'least concern' and some are even classed as pests in their native Australia. However, some species are becoming threatened due to extensive forest fires, invasive species and agriculture pressures.

# Macropods like to explore

Most macropod species need a lot of space to move around. They move in a tripod fashion, balancing on their two large back legs and moving themselves forward by resting their weight on to their tail. When frightened or moving quickly, they bounce and can jump very high. They feel comfortable in a field with lots of grazing and browsing opportunities.

## Positive Behaviours to Encourage

A large stimulating environment with features such as logs, trees, some sloping areas, a cosy bed and lots to eat will allow them to express all their natural behaviours. They enjoy shade and protection from a few trees, different substrates to walk on and a places to hide away from visitors.





# Macropods like to eat

Macropods spend a considerable amount of time eating. They graze on grass and browse on branches and leaves too. This is important for the health of their mouth. Macropods have a specialised 4 chambered stomach which means that they will bring partially digested food back up into their mouth to chew again. Pelleted feed will give them all the nutrients they need which can be supplemented with small amounts of vegetables. If they go long periods of time without eating, or if their food gets contaminated, they can become sick.

## **Positive Behaviours to Encourage**

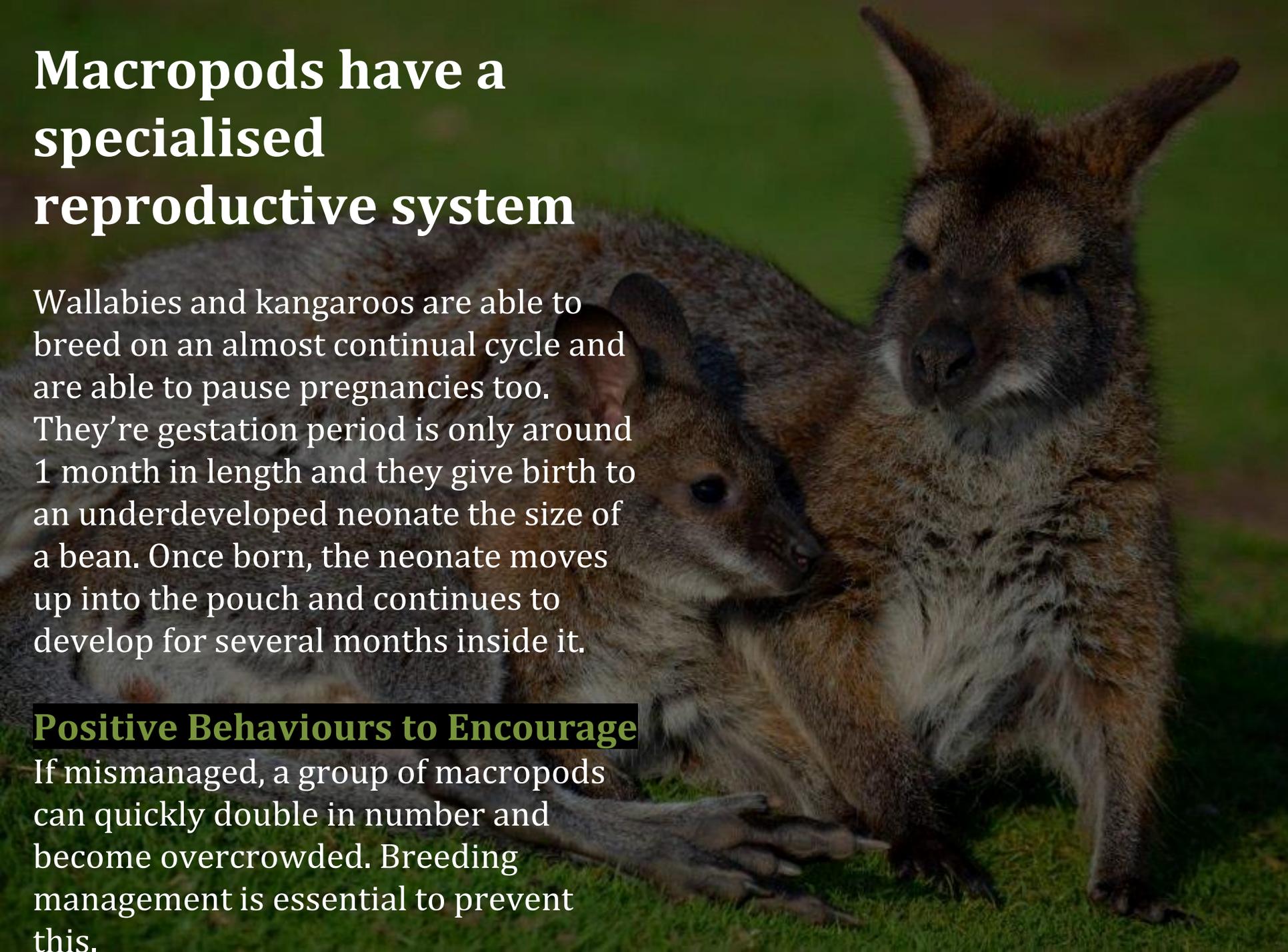
Promote opportunities for continuous grazing and a diet that gives all the nutrients they need and consistent access to low value forage such as hay. Browsing opportunities at different levels promote muscle usage.

# Macropods have a specialised reproductive system

Wallabies and kangaroos are able to breed on an almost continual cycle and are able to pause pregnancies too. They're gestation period is only around 1 month in length and they give birth to an underdeveloped neonate the size of a bean. Once born, the neonate moves up into the pouch and continues to develop for several months inside it.

## **Positive Behaviours to Encourage**

If mismanaged, a group of macropods can quickly double in number and become overcrowded. Breeding management is essential to prevent this.

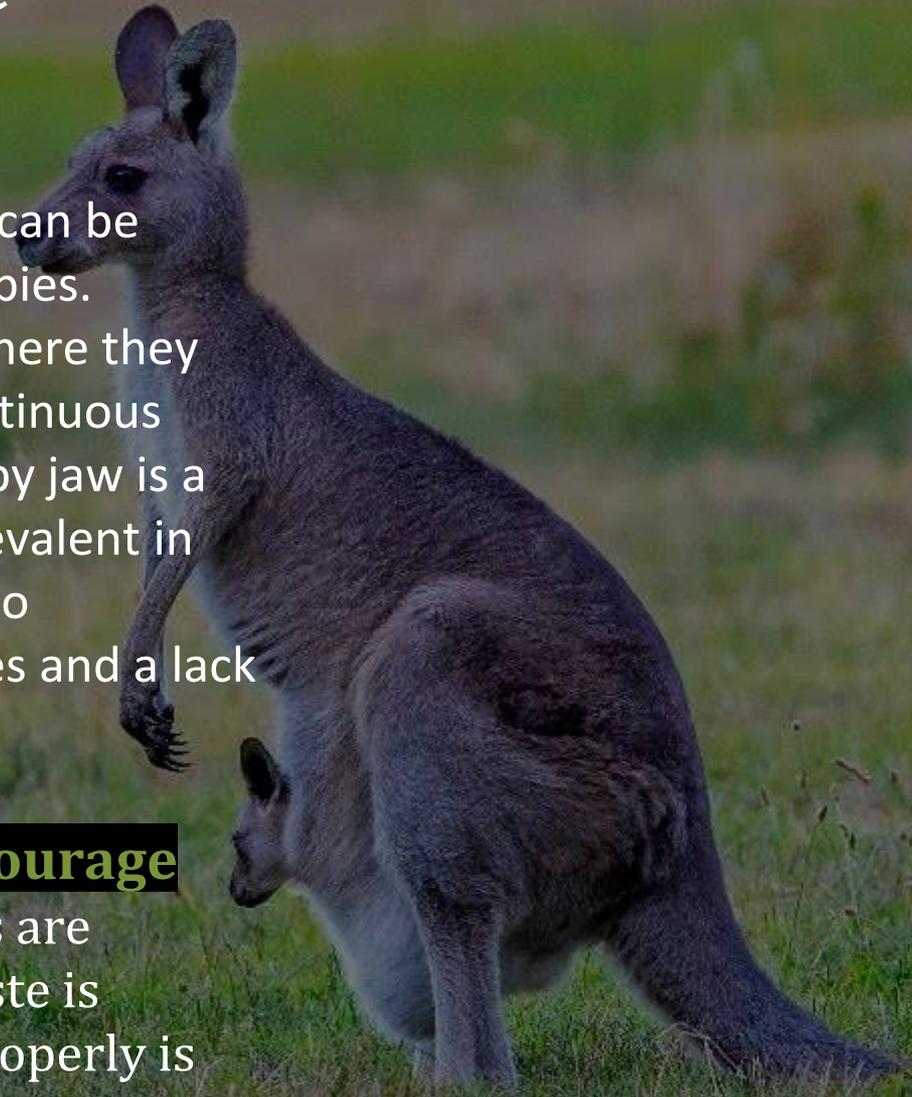


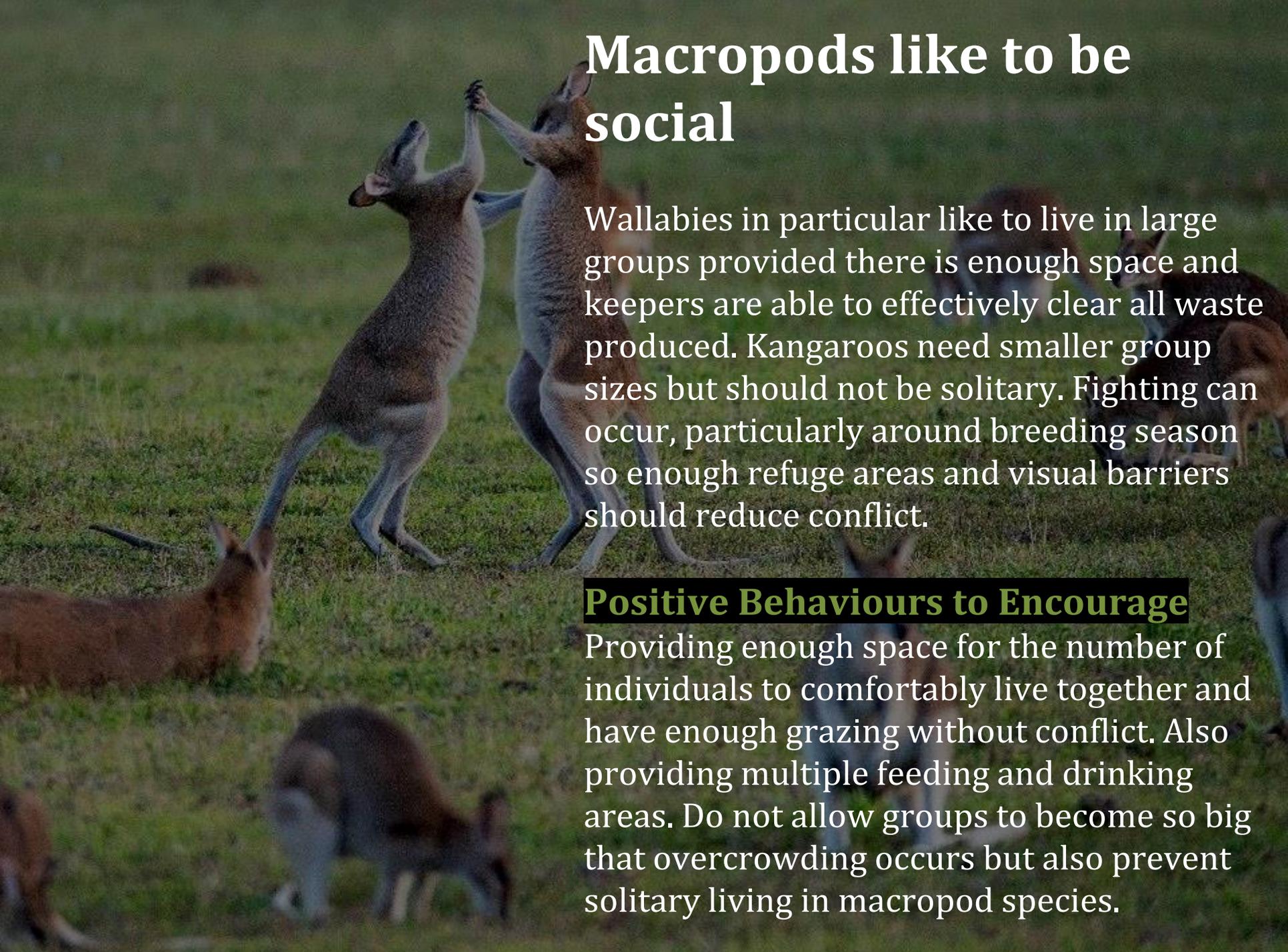
# Macropods can get diseases

Parasites such as internal worms can be prevalent in kangaroos and wallabies. Macropods eat the same grass where they leave faeces so it can cause a continuous cycle of reuptake of worms. Lumpy jaw is a disease of the mouth which is prevalent in macropod species. It occurs due to contamination of feed from faeces and a lack of small branches to chew on.

## **Positive Behaviours to Encourage**

Ensuring that macropod species are wormed regularly and their waste is cleared daily and disposed of properly is essential. Feed troughs should be cleaned daily. If possible, paddock rotation can help reduce reuptake of parasites and diseases.



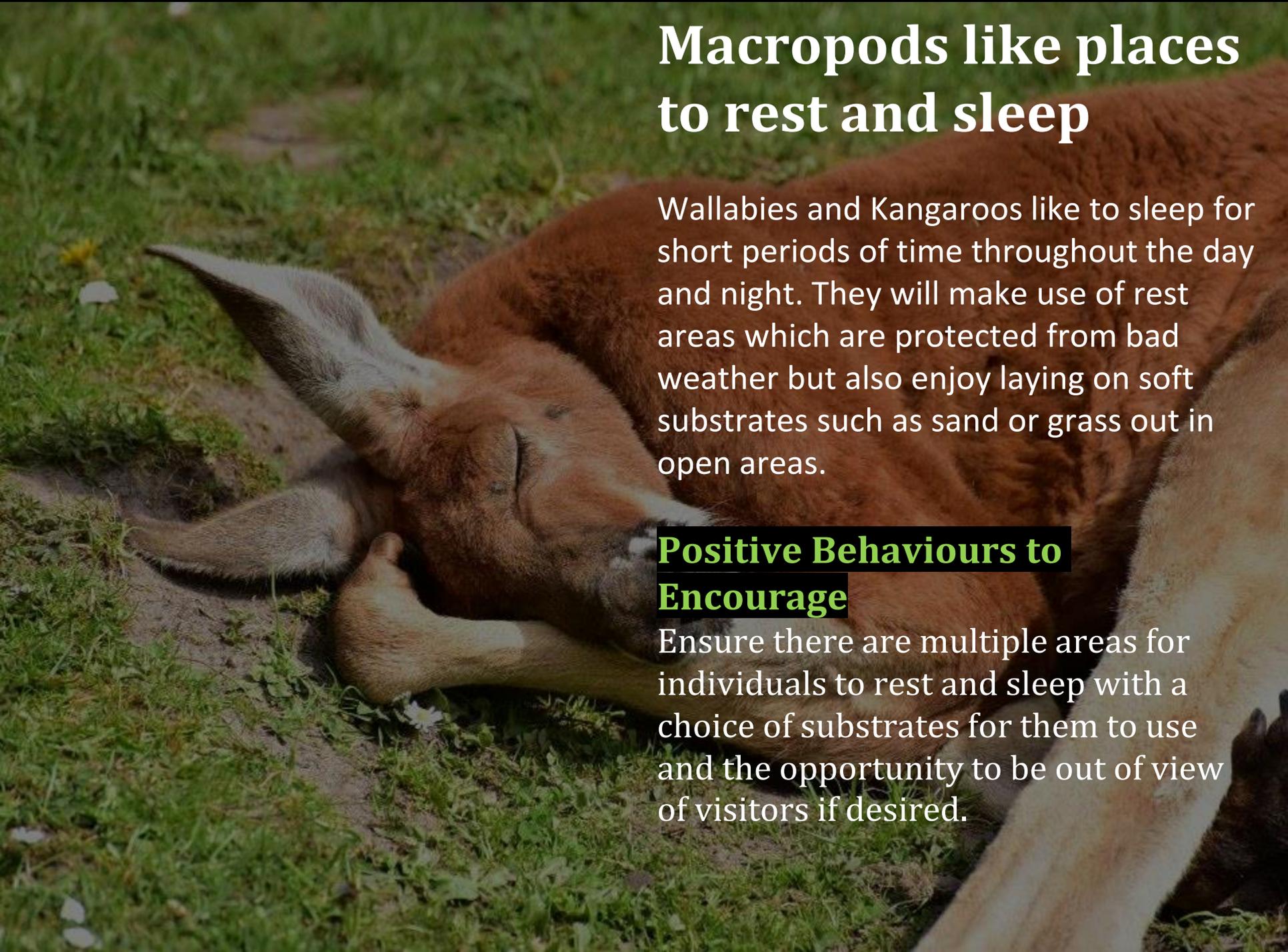
A group of kangaroos in a grassy field. Two kangaroos in the center are standing upright on their hind legs, facing each other with their front paws raised as if in a social interaction. Other kangaroos are visible in the foreground and background, some grazing and others standing.

# Macropods like to be social

Wallabies in particular like to live in large groups provided there is enough space and keepers are able to effectively clear all waste produced. Kangaroos need smaller group sizes but should not be solitary. Fighting can occur, particularly around breeding season so enough refuge areas and visual barriers should reduce conflict.

## **Positive Behaviours to Encourage**

Providing enough space for the number of individuals to comfortably live together and have enough grazing without conflict. Also providing multiple feeding and drinking areas. Do not allow groups to become so big that overcrowding occurs but also prevent solitary living in macropod species.

A close-up photograph of a brown wallaby resting on a patch of green grass. The wallaby's head is on the left, with its eyes closed and its front legs tucked up towards its face. The background is a soft-focus green lawn.

# Macropods like places to rest and sleep

Wallabies and Kangaroos like to sleep for short periods of time throughout the day and night. They will make use of rest areas which are protected from bad weather but also enjoy laying on soft substrates such as sand or grass out in open areas.

## **Positive Behaviours to Encourage**

Ensure there are multiple areas for individuals to rest and sleep with a choice of substrates for them to use and the opportunity to be out of view of visitors if desired.

# Macropods enjoy

A suitable environment which promotes all their natural movement and behaviours. A diet which is nutritious and allows them to eat almost continuously. The opportunity to reproduce but not to become overcrowded and to be free from diseases.

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

