

## **NSW:Aussie scientists map out koala genetics**

SYDNEY, April 9 AAP - Australia's dwindling koala population could receive better treatment for diseases thanks to research that has mapped out their genetic blueprint.

The research, led by Dr Rebecca Johnson from the Australian Museum and Professor Peter Timms from the Queensland University of Technology, has worked out the initial sequencing of the koala genome.

Prior to that, very little was known about the immune system of Australia's "honorary citizen", Prof Timms said.

The data was helping researchers understand why Queensland and NSW koalas had been crippled by the spread of chlamydia, while Victorian populations remained virtually unaffected.

"Chlamydia is a major killer of koalas and it also makes them infertile," Prof Timms told AAP on Tuesday.

"Because of this genome sequence we can now measure the immune response to current vaccines and tailor them better.

"We were pretty much working blindfolded in chlamydia treatment before but this new research will advance vaccine development significantly."

The research also revealed that the majority of koala genomic sequences shared similarities with other marsupials, such as the Tasmanian Devil.

Prof Timms said the research would help provide insights into how diseases could be treated for those animals as well.

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