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BY GRACE TREE

BANANA BOX FROGS

Did you know
that on their journey
from the banana
plantation to markets,
supermarkets and your
table, some banana
bunches carry a
surprising hitchhiker!



Picture in your mind a sleepy country town, somewhere in Queensland. It is early morning and a fine mist hangs over the land. The first fingers of yellow sunlight touch the town as magpies warble their welcome to the new day.

Banana trees cling to steep hillsides, their branches weighed down by bunches of fruit. The warm sunlight, filtering down through the leaves, stirs the plantation into life. Insects come to suck the sweet sap from the trees. Frogs come to feast on the insects.

Adventure Bound

In the plantations, workers cut down the heavy bunches of bananas. They attach them to a flying-fox cable and send them down the hillside to the packing shed. For a tiny green tree frog clinging to a bunch of bananas, an amazing adventure is about to begin.

The bananas are washed and soaked in water and then packed into tightly sealed crates. The bananas are still unripe and green so the green frogs are easily missed.

**Try
this!**

The Amphibian
Research Centre
welcomes school visits.
Go to [http://frogs.org.
au/arc/education.php](http://frogs.org.au/arc/education.php)
for information.

Queensland bananas are transported to markets in every Australian state and territory. Long before sunrise, the markets are buzzing with activity and noise. Semitrailers pull in to unload boxes of fruit and vegetables. **Wholesale** traders arrive to inspect the fruit and bargain over prices.

With boxes open for display, the frogs that have survived the journey make their escape. Eventually, quarantine inspectors, market workers and sometimes shoppers find the frogs.

Volunteers to the Rescue

Australia-wide, as many as 50 000 frogs per year arrive at markets packed in fruit, vegetables, flowers and other produce. Only New South Wales and Victoria have organisations to rescue and care for these frogs. The Victorian Frog Group and the NSW Frog and Tadpole Study Group (FATS) rely on volunteers to provide this service.

The banana box frog that began its long journey on that misty morning was lucky. A caring worker at the market rang the Victorian Frog Group and a volunteer collected the frog and delivered it to the **Amphibian** Research Centre.

A Second Chance

Many banana box frogs arrive at the Amphibian Research Centre in poor condition. **Dehydrated** or injured, they have little chance of survival. To prevent the spread of disease, the frogs spend at least a month in **quarantine**.

With good food and care, many recover. Released into a suitable location, they have a second chance at life. Due to quarantine concerns, some must remain in care where they live their lives as pampered pets.

Did you know?



- In Victoria alone, some 6000 to 8000 banana box frogs end up at fruit and vegetable markets every year.
- Different species of frogs hitchhike in bananas, such as the green tree frog, the dwarf tree frog and the dainty tree frog.

▼ Frogs can become accidental hitchhikers.





GLOSSARY

amphibian – an animal that can live on land or in water

dehydrated – suffering from lack of water

quarantine – separate from others

wholesale – bought in large quantities

 Check this out! 

- <http://frogs.org.au/vfg/features/lostfrogs.html>
- www.fats.org.au/activities/rescue.html