

Experiences with bushfires

livestock assessment and recovery

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PREMIUM
FOOD AND WINE FROM OUR
CLEAN
ENVIRONMENT



In January and February 2014 there were major fires in SA in 7 main locations.

Numbers of livestock were injured or killed in 3 of these events



Who can help ?

- assess injured livestock,
- assist with treatments,
- what about disposal?



PIRSA staff have a role in **assessing** burnt livestock, **coordinating** animal relief efforts and helping producers to recover



Some PIRSA staff locations (examples)

SA Country Fire Service
CFS Regions

The map displays six CFS regions in South Australia, each with a unique color and associated staff photo. Red arrows connect the photos to their respective regions on the map:

- Region 1** (Light Green): Located in the south-eastern coastal area. Staff photo: A man in a blue shirt.
- Region 2** (Blue): Located in the central coastal area. Staff photo: A man in a light blue shirt.
- Region 3** (Orange): Located in the eastern coastal area. Staff photo: A man in a dark blue shirt and cap.
- Region 4** (Light Green): Located in the northern inland area. Staff photo: A man in a dark blue shirt.
- Region 5** (Pink): Located in the southern inland area. Staff photo: A man in a brown jacket and glasses.
- Region 6** (Olive Green): Located in the western coastal area. Staff photo: A woman in a dark blue polo shirt and sunglasses.

PIRSA provides and coordinates

- PIRSA vets and Animal Health Officers located in Regional areas
- Stock agents providing relief supplies
- Other volunteers eg SAVEM

In the immediate time after the fires, then hands over to recovery agencies such as Primary Producers SA, State Recovery Office etc.

This presentation discusses:

How are livestock assessed after fire, how are decisions made?

Warning – some images may be confronting

This is what you might see



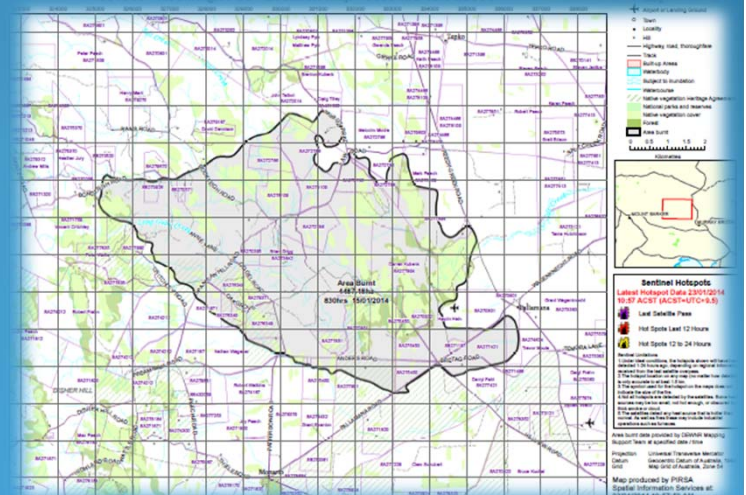
Livestock are stressed and suffer injuries that include:

- burns to head , body and limbs
- Smoke inhalation and lung damage
- Dehydration and heat stress
- Physical and traumatic injuries - fractures , cuts etc
- Toxaemia and hypovolaemia

All of these vary in degree and extent and require different management.

A variety of species can be affected , and decisions about management can be complex involving:

- scale of the event
- resources available
- species and value of the stock, insurance
- time that the decision is made
- weather & predicted weather
- prognosis with or without treatment
- other options



What decision should be made?

Some good guidelines available on the DEPI website

The screenshot shows the DEPI website interface. At the top left is the logo for the State Government of Victoria, Department of Environment and Primary Industries. A search bar is located at the top right. Below the header is a navigation menu with categories: Home, Agriculture & food, Environment & wildlife, Fire & emergencies (highlighted), Water, Pets, Fishing & hunting, Forestry & land use, and About us. A breadcrumb trail indicates the current page: Home > Fire & emergencies > Recovery after an emergency > Livestock after an emergency > Assessing sheep after a bushfire. On the right side of the breadcrumb trail are 'Share' and 'Print' icons. The main content area features a sidebar with a list of links: Warnings, bushfires and incidents; Bushfire safety and information; Planned burns; Managing risk and learning about managing fire; Fire restrictions and regulations; and Firefighting and employment. The main heading is 'Assessing sheep after a bushfire'. The text below the heading states: 'Sheep are common victims of bushfires in Victoria. The information below describes how fire may affect sheep and what options landholders may have in responding.' It also mentions that the content is a copy of Agriculture Note (Agnote) number AG1371. An 'Introduction' section begins with the text: 'Sheep are common victims of bushfires in Victoria. Often large numbers are affected when they mob themselves into corners of paddocks against fences, where they are burnt or suffocate. Burns sustained often reflect this behaviour, with animals on the outside'. A small photograph of a bushfire scene is visible on the right side of the page.

However, we should be cautious about accepting these recommendations without assessing other factors.

For example:

- **Category 1: Destroy immediately**

Sheep that are unconscious or semi-conscious, those down and unable to walk, **those with extensive burns to bare areas, those with major swelling of the limbs** and those showing respiratory difficulties from smoke-damaged lungs should be humanely destroyed as soon as possible.

This may not always be the case

Category 2: retain for treatment or salvage slaughter

Monitoring of these sheep is required every day or two to treat or destroy sheep as symptoms develop.

Many animals that appeared badly damaged may be saved with some treatments.

Decisions made on the fate of affected livestock will take in to account many factors.

Very often different decisions are made 7 to 10 days afterwards when further treatment and salvage options become available. At this time treatments may include :

- Effective pain relief
- Antibiotics
- Topical treatments – sprays & ointments
- Fly strike prevention

Some case studies- 2 weeks after

- Sheep at Rockleigh and Eden Valley
- cattle from Eden Valley
- Lesions included severe burns under legs, and to udders in sheep and burned teats / udders in a group of 16 heifers



Some sheep may be saved

2 weeks after the fire 60/200 pregnant ewe hogget sheep drafted out by the farmer – he thought that he would have to shoot them all.



Sheep

After **two weeks** of simple treatment involving topical ointment, spray & an injection of antibiotic & pain relief...

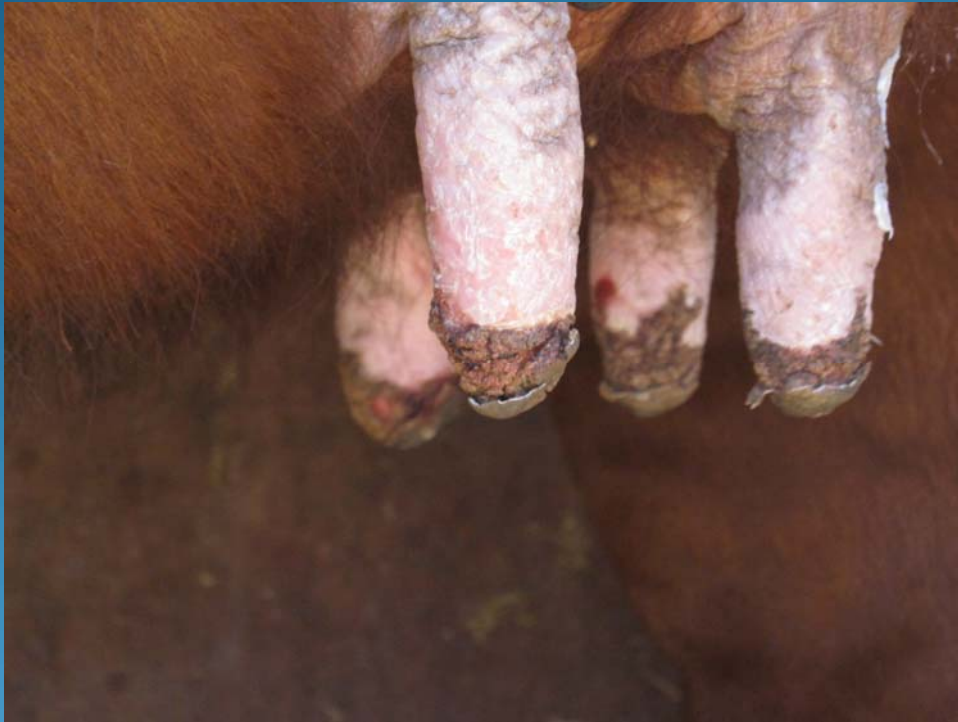




Only 1 of the original 60 sheep was destroyed. But.....

- how many will have significant scarring of the teats, causing some mismothering ?
- Will others have too much scarring and contraction of tendons etc to allow enough movement?
- time will tell

16 Pregnant stud heifers . Owner believed they should be sent direct to slaughter...



2 weeks later after topical ointment applied



Will some of these teats be too badly scarred for calves to suckle?

- follow up of these cases will occur
- At least he will have live calves & cows
- Many teats may be able to be unblocked with simple surgery

Questions and comments ?

