

# LIVESTOCK SAFETY DURING BUSHFIRES

If the past few weeks are anything to go by, this bushfire season could be long and intense. Here we reproduce guidance prepared by PIRSA about how to ensure the safety of your livestock during bushfires. Whilst caring for livestock and other animals before and after a bushfire is essential, personal safety should be considered as a first priority on all occasions. Be sure to get your Bushfire Survival Plan up to date and to hand.

## PLAN AHEAD

If you own livestock, part of preparing a Bushfire Survival Plan for your family should include preparing options for how to deal with your livestock. Planning should start well before the bushfire season and is part of on-going property management.

Livestock such as sheep, cattle, goats, alpacas or horses are affected in bushfires by radiant heat from the fire, smoke inhalation, burns from walking over hot ground and other injuries that might be caused by panic, eg getting caught in fencing. Being prepared with a plan and ensuring other people are familiar with the plan will make it easier to deal with your livestock when fire threatens and you will know what to do if animals are injured.

It is important to act well before a fire starts. Making a choice when a bushfire threatens your property is too late – ensure personal safety first. Practicing your plans will make it easier to do if fire threatens.

## BEFORE THE BUSHFIRE SEASON

For sheep, cattle, goats, alpacas or horses, preparing one or more 'safe paddocks' prior to the bushfire season is a good option.

A 'safe' paddock is one that:

- has adequate water supply without relying on electric pumps
- is easy to access, is well fenced and has adequate space
- is either irrigated or hard grazed to reduce the fuel load, and
- is not surrounded by other combustible material like thick vegetation, tree lines or haystacks.

Your options will depend on the size of your property, the number of livestock and where your animals are kept. If you prefer to relocate individual animals of high value to a low fire risk property in another area:

- plan where you will go
- understand what will trigger you to leave (eg high fire risk rating, emergency warning)
- prepare an emergency kit that can go with the animal(s)
- make an agreement with the property owner about conditions of agistment
- know alternative routes to get there in case the main pathway becomes blocked.
- Key actions:
- Review and practice your plan.

- Establish 'safe paddock(s)' or identify the safest areas for your livestock.
- Prepare an emergency kit.
- Ensure your Property Identification Code (PIC) is current.
- Ensure all stock are identifiable to your property PIC.
- Ensure animal housing has sufficient area free of combustible material.
- If needed, establish contingencies for water, feeding, milking, ventilation should power be cut.

## ON HIGH FIRE DANGER DAYS

Key actions:

- Enact your plan – this may be to relocate animals to a safer paddock or safer property.

## DURING A BUSHFIRE – IF A FIRE THREATENS

Key actions:

- Enact your Bushfire Survival Plan.
- Only move livestock to 'safe paddock(s)' or an open space with the least vegetation if there is time, don't leave it too late – ensure personal safety first.
- Making a choice to move livestock when a bushfire has already started may be too late. Stock may be unsettled and consequently moving paddocks may take longer than normal when a fire is in progress. Enacting plans on high fire risk days before fires start is the safest option.
- Monitor and assess the fire's progress through ABC radio or the website of your state rural fire authority (see right).

## AFTER THE BUSHFIRE HAS PASSED

Key actions:

- When it is safe, inspect livestock for burns or injuries.
- Seek veterinary advice – injured animals may need to be humanely destroyed.
- Enact your plan for backup water, feeding, ventilation, milking, etc if the power has failed.
- Provide surviving livestock access to good quality clean water, fodder and shelter.
- Monitor livestock for several days.
- Dispose of dead animals in a prompt and environmentally safe manner.

Information sourced from [https://pir.sa.gov.au/emergency\\_management/bushfires/livestock\\_safety\\_during\\_bushfires](https://pir.sa.gov.au/emergency_management/bushfires/livestock_safety_during_bushfires)

## USEFUL RESOURCES

### PIRSA WEBSITE

[www.pir.sa.gov.au/emergency\\_management/bushfires](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/emergency_management/bushfires)

- The farming guidelines for the reduction of bushfire risk.
- Bushfires and livestock: a checklist for before, during and after.

### NSW DPI AND LLS

- Fire affected landholders in NSW requiring emergency fodder can call the NSW Government's Agricultural and Animal Services Hotline on 1800 814 647.
- [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/bushfires](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/bushfires)
- [www.lls.nsw.gov.au/emergency/bushfires](http://www.lls.nsw.gov.au/emergency/bushfires)

### AGRICULTURE VICTORIA

[www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/emergencies](http://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/emergencies)

- Livestock in emergencies.
- Farm recovery after bushfire.
- Livestock after an emergency.
- Assessing sheep after a bushfire.

## STATE RURAL FIRE AUTHORITIES

For help or information about bushfires, state rural fire authorities should be contacted directly:

- NSW Rural Fire Service: [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au)
- Queensland Rural Fire Service: [www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au](http://www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au)
- South Australian Country Fire Service: [www.cfs.sa.gov.au](http://www.cfs.sa.gov.au)
- CFA (Country Fire Authority) Victoria: [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)
- Bush Fire Service WA: [www.dfes.wa.gov.au](http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au)
- Tasmania Fire Service: [www.fire.tas.gov.au](http://www.fire.tas.gov.au)