

Flood emergencies: helping your animals

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Orange

When a large flood occurs, the State Emergency Services (SES) is in control, with other government agencies carrying out supporting roles. When it comes to the welfare of animals, it is NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) that has responsibility. NSW DPI's area of responsibility is ensuring the care of all animals affected by flood, including livestock, companion animals, horses and wildlife. Basically, NSW DPI's role is to coordinate a response to animals at risk.

In a flood, don't ignore the welfare of animals that you care for. To minimise the risk to your animals make arrangements for their safety by being prepared for floods. You are responsible for helping your animals. If you cannot help your animals, notify NSW DPI for assistance.

When a flood occurs, NSW DPI's role is to coordinate the provision of immediate animal relief services and rehabilitation assistance to primary producers. For example, assistance measures include:

- supply and distribution of emergency fodder and other materials;
- assessment, destruction and disposal of injured stock;
- provision of animal care services for animals evacuated from an area affected by a flood emergency;
- administration of financial assistance including fodder and agistment transport rebates for flood-affected stock, and low interest rate loans if a natural disaster area is declared.

NSW DPI can draw support from other agricultural and animal welfare organisations that have agreed to help them in emergencies. The focus is ensuring the welfare of all animals impacted by a flood.

Feeding and caring for animals**Livestock**

Landholders need to identify the location of high ground away from the flood and the best way to move their livestock to this refuge. They should move their animals to these refuge areas in the event of a flood alert, as well as supplies of fodder to feed the affected stock for the expected duration of the flood.

If you cannot help your animals, NSW DPI may provide assistance such as:

- helping to move animals and fodder;
- coordinating veterinary assistance for injured animals;
- providing guidance on the disposal of livestock killed as a result of a flood.

Companion animals

If you are directed to evacuate you should take your companion animals with you to the evacuation centre. If you cannot help your animals, notify NSW DPI. The type of assistance provided by NSW DPI includes:

- coordinating the rescue and housing of companion animals;
- coordinating the transport of food to animals stranded by floodwaters;
- providing veterinary assistance to companion animals affected by flood emergencies.



Wildlife

NSW DPI is responsible for ensuring the care and welfare of wildlife affected by a flood, with assistance from organisations with wildlife expertise. The type of assistance provided to wildlife includes:

- rescue and transport to an appropriate release site;
- feeding animals stranded by floodwater;
- organising appropriate veterinary care.

The care of rescued wildlife should only be attempted by those trained and possessing the skills and equipment to do so. This is because of the special requirements of wildlife and the need to rehabilitate and release them back into the area from which they came.

During a flood

When a flood threat develops, the SES is the agency responsible for controlling the response. NSW DPI supports the SES by coordinating agriculture and animal support services, and undertakes this role with the help of government and non-government Participating and Supporting Organisations.

The SES will provide flood information, including flood forecasts, road closures and advice on evacuations and property protection, over local radio stations.

NSW DPI will liaise with the SES to assess the magnitude of the problem and the threat to agriculture and animals, and provide information on how to help your animals including where to take your large animals if you have to evacuate them. You should take your companion animals with you to the evacuation centre.

After the flood

After a flood recedes the hard work begins. Livestock may need veterinary care and feeding. Fences, yards, buildings, roads and bridges may need repair, and power and telecommunications services may need to be restored. Peoples' homes require cleaning and restoration and their pets need to be brought home. Injured wildlife needs to be assessed and released back to the bush when fit enough.

NSW DPI can assist with some of these tasks, including advising landowners on animal welfare matters and providing financial assistance by way of a transport subsidy for bringing in fodder or sending stock off to agistment. You may also be eligible for a low interest rate loan should a natural disaster declaration be made for your area.

More information can be found on the SES website at www.ses.nsw.gov.au or the NSW DPI website at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au.

In the event of a flood:

- **Control lies with SES.**
- **NSW DPI is responsible for ensuring the welfare of animals.**

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (December 2005). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of New South Wales Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.