

THE BUSHFIRE OPERATING PLAN

2006



NSW DEPARTMENT OF
PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

Bushfire Operational Plan – updated December 2006

THE BUSHFIRE OPERATING PLAN

The Bushfire Operating Plan should be read in conjunction with the *NSW State Agricultural and Animal Services Supporting Plan*. This supporting plan sets out how NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) coordinates a response to emergencies involving agriculture and animals under the *State Disaster Plan*.

The Bushfire Operating Plan is authorised in accordance with the provision of the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989*.

RECOMMENDED

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The Bushfire Operating Plan as at December 2006

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1. INTRODUCTION

The major aim of this plan is to outline strategies necessary to implement efficient agriculture and animal bushfire relief, including livestock, companion animals and wildlife.

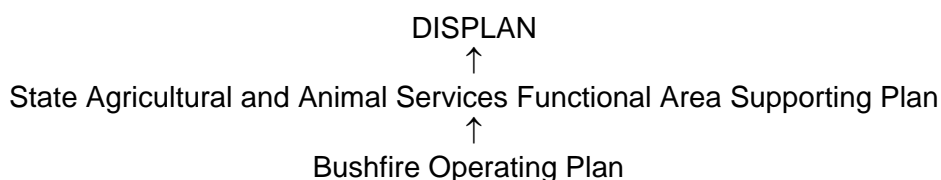
This plan should be read in conjunction with the *State Agricultural and Animal Services Functional Area Supporting Plan* to the *State Disaster Plan*. This supporting plan sets out how NSW DPI coordinates a response to emergencies involving agriculture and animals under the State Disaster Plan.

2. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN NSW

Emergency Management in NSW is legislated under the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989* (SERM Act). This Act provides the basis for emergency management in NSW and requires that the State Disaster Plan (DISPLAN) be developed and continually updated.

DISPLAN ensures that there is a coordinated response to all emergencies by all agencies having responsibilities and functions in emergencies. DISPLAN also identifies the combat (lead) agency and the coordination of the activities and tasks of all other agencies (functional areas) in emergencies. Bushfires are defined as an emergency under DISPLAN. Also included in DISPLAN is the requirement that these Functional Areas develop Supporting Plans to DISPLAN.

In the event of **any** emergency NSW DPI is the Agriculture & Animal Services Functional Area Coordinator and has the responsibility for the welfare of **all animals**, including livestock, companion animals, wildlife and fish. This is set out under the *State Agricultural and Animal Services Functional Area Supporting Plan*.



Representatives of NSW DPI (Agricultural and Animal Services Functional Area) are members of local, district and state emergency management committees. Local committees are set up on local council areas, while district committees are based on emergency management districts. Local and district committees are made up of representatives of emergency service organisations, functional areas and combat agencies that are located within the local or district area.

The emergency management structure for NSW



3. ROLE OF NSW DPI IN BUSHFIRE EMERGENCIES

The role and responsibilities of NSW DPI under emergency conditions such as bushfire are separate and distinct from those set out in DISPLAN in response to an emergency animal or plant pest or disease outbreak where NSW DPI is the nominated combat agency.

DISPLAN identifies the Executive Director (Biosecurity, Compliance and Mine Safety) of NSW DPI as the Agricultural Services Functional Area Coordinator (ASFAC). ASFAC, through NSW DPI, is responsible for responding to all emergencies in NSW that involve agriculture and animals.

The *State Agricultural and Animal Services Functional Area Supporting Plan* details the control and coordination arrangements for the use of all agricultural resources available within the State in response to and the initial recovery from the impact and the effects of any emergency. Local, District and State Emergency Management Committee representatives, or their alternates, are to attend the regular meetings of these committees to ensure that they and the other committee members are aware of each others' roles in emergency management and that appropriate networks are set up prior to any emergency.

Agriculture is defined as “the cultivation of land, including crop raising, forestry, stock raising and farming” while animals are defined as “companion animals, horses, wildlife, livestock and fish”.

In response to a bushfire emergency, with the support of participating and supporting organisations, NSW DPI's primary role and responsibility is to:

- provide immediate animal relief services and continuing rehabilitation assistance to primary producers;
- coordinate the supply and distribution of emergency fodder supplies and other materials to animals affected by bushfires;
- manage the care of companion pets; and
- provide animal care services for livestock, horses, wildlife, fish and companion pets of victims evacuated from an area affected by a bushfire emergency.

The welfare of **all animals** affected by bushfire emergencies is the responsibility of the Agricultural and Animal Services Functional Area through NSW DPI.

4. ROLE OF PARTICIPATING AND SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS

A number of agricultural and animal welfare organisations have agreed to assist ASFAC in responding to agricultural and animal emergencies. These organisations are divided into either participating or supporting organisations, depending on the level of assistance they can provide in the event of an agricultural and animal emergency.

4.1 PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

These organisations have agreed to commit their resources, in a formal agreement, to ASFAC in any emergency response when called on to do so by ASFAC. ASFAC then determines the priorities for usage and deployment of resources/services from these organisations. These organisations include:

- NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI);
- Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC);
- Local Government Association of NSW and Shires Association of NSW;
- NSW Farmers' Association;
- State Council for the Rural Lands Protection Boards;

- Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA);
- Animal Welfare League; and
- Wildlife Information and Rescue Service (WIRES).

4.2 SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS

These organisations have agreed to commit their resources, in an informal agreement, to ASFAC in an emergency response. They have agreed to provide appropriate resources, technical and specialist advice and animal welfare support during emergencies. These organisations include, but are not limited to:

- NSW Food Authority;
- Horse Rescue Australia;
- Australian Wildlife Ambulance Rescue Emergencies (AWARE);
- Pet Industry Association of Australia (PIAA);
- Royal Agricultural Society Cat Control;
- Royal NSW Canine Council;
- Northern Tablelands Wildlife Carers’;
- Sydney Metro Wildlife Services;
- Native Animal Trust;
- Australian Veterinary Association (NSW Branch);
- Australian Chicken Meat Federation;
- Australian Welfare Advisory Council;
- Australian Egg Industry Association;
- Australian Quarantine Inspection Service;
- Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai and Manly/Warringah/Pittwater Local Agricultural and Animal Emergency Groups;
- Fauna and Marine Park Association;
- HANROB Petcare Centre; and
- Animal Welfare Advisory Council.

5. SETTING UP STATE, DISTRICT AND LOCAL COORDINATION CENTRES

The level to which bushfire coordination centres are set up is dependent on the magnitude of the emergency and should only be done in consultation with the State Coordinator (SC) who is usually the Director, Emergencies, Weeds & Pest Animals or alternatively the Leader, General Emergencies Preparedness & Response.

In general it is best if the Coordination Centre is set up in the same building or as near as possible to the building where the Emergency Operations Centre (Rural Fire Service in the case of bushfires) is located.

5.1 APPOINTMENT OF COORDINATORS

Local Coordinators (LC) are, in the first instance, to be the Local Emergency Management Committee representatives in the council area affected by the emergency. This position is also known as the Local Agricultural Services Functional Area Liaison Officer (LASFALO). There is an alternate representative for most local committees and this person should act in the role of LC in the case of the nominated representative being absent or being rostered off duty.

District Coordinators (DC) are the District Emergency Management Committee representatives for the district in which the emergency occurs. These people are generally the NSW DPI Regional Directors, but in some cases other senior NSW DPI officers have taken this role. There is an

alternate representative to all district committees and this person should act in the role of DC in the case of the nominated representative being absent or being rostered off duty.

The State Coordinator (SC) is usually the Director, Emergencies, Weeds & Pest Animals or alternatively the Leader, General Emergencies Preparedness & Response.

5.2 EQUIPMENT NEEDED FOR COORDINATION CENTRES

Equipment and stores are required for an effective coordination centre. Not all of the following listed items may be needed in an emergency.

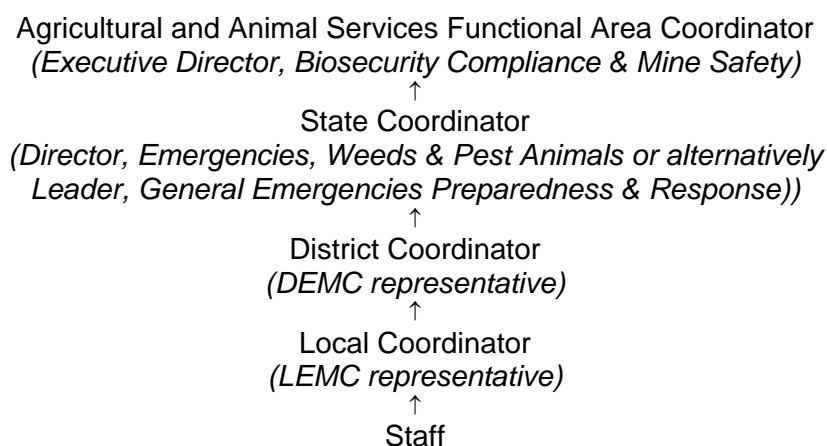
- Telephones, between 2 and 6 depending on the magnitude of the emergency, with the capability of diverting to the next line if busy and diverting to a mobile for after hours contact;
- Copy of the Bushfire Operating Plan;
- Answering machine;
- Facsimiles (1 or 2 with a fax stream capability if possible);
- Mobile telephones, radios and/or hand held UHF radios can be used if appropriate;
- Photocopier;
- Computers and printer (preferable pre-configured laptops with internal modem with access to an analogue telephone line and secure ID card to access NSW DPI service);
- Access to Bureau of Meteorology weather data;
- Files and filing cabinet;
- White boards (between 2 and 4 for contact, situation, access and task boards all with “correct as at ‘date’ and ‘time’” these should be copied regularly and the information filed);
- Maps of the area with plastic overlays (1 in 250,000 topographic). If maps are not current contact State Coordinator;
- Clipboards;
- Identification for staff - such as tabards;
- Stationery (including various forms shown as appendices to this plan);
- Phone books and NSW DPI directories from appropriate locations; and
- In and out trays.

Staff may be required to operate in the field, performing tasks such as assisting at an animal evacuation centre, door knocking to inform residents of how to prepare their animals for evacuation or helping to evacuate animals. A contents list for a Coordination Centre Field Officer’s Kit is provided (**Appendix A**).

Requirements for animal assessment, destruction and disposal field teams are provided at Section 8.3.

5.3 CHAIN OF COMMAND

When NSW DPI staff are involved in responding to an emergency their normal line of management is set aside and staff are directed as shown:



5.4 CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS (COP)

Each coordination centre should develop a Concept of Operations (COP) for how the centre will function and manage the emergency. This can also be known as an Incident Action Plan (IAP). The preferred format is SMEAC:

- **Situation** (what is the overall situation and the coordination centre's position within the operation)
- **Mission** (objectives of the coordination centre)
- **Execution** (how the coordination centre will achieve the objectives)
- **Administration** (what logistics will support the coordination centre)
- **Command/Control/Coordination and Communication** (who is in charge, who reports to who, how and when will they report, what are the communication links)

The COP should be updated as appropriate with the date and time of the update recorded on the COP. The COP should form the basis of training/inducting new staff in the centre. This training/change over period should be for a minimum of one day.

5.5 FORMS FOR LOCAL COORDINATION CENTRES (LCC)

Standard report forms should be used in LCC's. These forms are referred to in the rest of the document and are included in the appendices at the back of this plan.

6. RESPONSE TO BUSHFIRE EMERGENCIES

Generally the response to bushfire emergencies will not alter even though the types of animals at risk may vary from livestock to companion animals to wildlife. A local bushfire may be handled by the Rural Fire Service (RFS) as a single agency event, but NSW DPI may be requested to assist by coordinating the response if agriculture or animals are at risk. If the resources required for a response are not available at local level then the DC should be requested to assist in obtaining them and similarly the SC should be requested to assist if resources cannot be obtained at the district level. On nearly all occasions the response to a bushfire emergency will be at the District level.

Staff working in bushfire emergencies should familiarise themselves with their role and responsibilities in section 15 (staff role descriptions) and section 6 (response) of this plan.

The following sections describe a general response to a bushfire emergency. There are **four phases** in any response to an emergency, these are:

6.1 THE ALERT PHASE

The alert can be made at any level: local, district or state. This alert should commence on advice of the Rural Fire Service (RFS). In the case of bushfires the RFS is the combat agency. Once the ALERT phase commences the following processes must be followed:

- Local, District and State coordinators, or their alternates, are to be alerted;
- Nominated contact personnel from participating and supporting organisations which may become involved must be put on alert;
- Liaison Officer(s) (LO) that may be deployed to the RFS Emergency Operation Centres must be identified and alerted in case they are needed;
- Communication must be established between Local, District and State Coordinators; and
- Local Coordinators (LC) must organise the collection of intelligence and disseminate.

6.2 THE STAND-BY PHASE

At this stage the State Coordinator (SC) should:

- Liaise with the Agricultural and Animal Services Functional Area Coordinator;
- Set up the State Coordination Centre (SCC) and associated staffing and resource requirements;
- Provide contact/activity details to the District and Local Coordinators, State Emergency Operations Centre (SEOC) and RFS State Emergency Operations Centre;
- Put appropriate participating and supporting organisations on stand-by and confirm contact details; and
- Develop COP for SCC.

At this stage the District Coordinator (DC) should:

- Set up a District Coordination Centre (DCC) with appropriate resources (see 5.2);
- Advise the SCC of DCC activities and contact details;
- Advise the LC of activities and contact details;
- Put appropriate participating and supporting organisations on stand-by and confirm contact details;
- Provide contact details to RFS District Emergency Operations Centre (DEOC) and DEMO; and
- Develop COP for DCC.

At this phase the Local Coordinator (LC) should:

- Under direction from the DC, set up and staff a Local Coordination Centre (LCC) at an appropriate site, this may be in the RFS Local Emergency Operation Centre (LEOC) or it may be at another site such as the local airport or RLPB or NSW DPI office;
- If possible it is best if the Agricultural and Animal Services Coordination Centre is co-located in the same building as the LEOC;
- Where the centres are co-located the minimum staff required is one person within the centre and one person moving around in the field;
- Nominate/advise staff to act as local Liaison Officers (LO), such as in the LEOC if it is remote from the LCC;
- Ensure local LO's reports back on all activities;
- Report to DC;
- Appoint an Evacuation Centre Animal Services Officer (ECASO) if required;
- Normally one person will be needed as a LO in each Emergency Operation Centre. It is important that LO's are located in Emergency Operation Centres as soon as possible;
- Nominate staff to assist in handling animals in evacuation centres if required;
- Develop a contact list for local/district participating and supporting organisations utilising the form **(Appendix B)**;
- Contact personnel from participating and supporting organisations to put them on stand-by and provide them with contact details for coordination centre/s;
- Develop a COP for the emergency; and
- Situation reports (Sitreps) should be prepared and dispatched on an 'as needs' basis but at least daily.

6.3 THE CALL-OUT PHASE

This is the operational phase where all agricultural and animal resources are coordinated to respond to the bushfire. Participating and supporting organisations should remain on stand-by and be called upon as needed. Operations should be undertaken as per the COP and Bushfire Operating Plan. Daily briefings/debriefings should be attended / held and daily Situation Reports (Sitreps) should be dispatched to all appropriate people.

At this phase the State Coordinator (SC) should:

- Activate the State Coordination Centre (SCC);
- Liaise with the DC and LC;

- Coordinate all activities at the State level following the SCC COP;
- Report to the Agricultural and Animal Services Functional Area Coordinator on activities;
- Report to the executive and Minister's Office; and
- Liaise with participating and supporting organisations at the State level.

At this phase the District Coordinator (DC) should:

- Activate the DCC;
- Liaise with the LC and SC on district activities;
- Coordinate all activities at the district level following the DCC COP;
- Report to SC on activities/issues (Sitrep); and
- Liaise with participating and supporting organisations at District level.

At this phase the Local Coordinator (LC) should:

- Activate the LCC;
- Coordinate all activities at the local level following the LCC COP;
- Report to DC on activities/issues (Sitrep);
- Ensure adequate staffing and resourcing needs are being met; and
- Liaise with participating and supporting agencies at Local level.

6.4 THE STAND-DOWN PHASE

When the emergency is over and appropriate recovery assistance is completed all people and organisations should be informed that they have been stood down and a formal “debrief” including all organisations involved in providing agricultural and animal services **must be held**. Following the debrief, a report must be prepared highlighting any lessons learnt and any improvements suggested to policy, plans or SOPs.

6.5 RECOVERY

After the response and initial recovery, the DC may in cooperation with local coordinators appoint representatives to a Bushfire Recovery Committee if such a committee is required. The DC may also need to request the presence of a Rural Assistance Authority (RAA) representative in the area to assist with any claims. The DC may be required to appoint a Donated Fodder Coordinator (DFC) to oversee the distribution of any donated fodder that arrives post-bushfire.

The LC may need to arrange for the extended stay of some evacuated animals if required and identify ongoing animal welfare needs. They may also support the Bushfire Recovery Committee and DFC.

7. WHAT ASSISTANCE IS PROVIDED FOR ANIMALS

Bushfires vary greatly in the threat that they pose to agriculture, animals and the community depending on the scale of the fire. The type of assistance provided is also governed by the type of animals at threat. These can be divided into livestock, companion animals and wildlife.

7.1 RESPONSE TO BUSHFIRE EMERGENCIES INVOLVING LIVESTOCK

The type of assistance given to primary producers and their animals in the event of a bushfire emergency is of an animal welfare nature. It is important that landholders are encouraged to be proactive in preparing for bushfires; this includes contingency plans for moving stock to safe areas, hazard reduction work and ensuring that adequate stocks of fodder are stored and accessible during fires. Any NSW DPI response must be discussed with and approved by the SC and ASFAC. The assistance provided by the Agricultural and Animal Services Functional Area includes:

- Assisting stock owners in assessing burnt livestock;
- Assisting stock owners in the slaughter and disposal of burnt livestock where appropriate;
- Coordinating the supply and distribution of emergency fodder and other materials;
- Providing a 50% transport rebate for transporting fodder to affected stock or transporting affected stock to and from agistment;
- Providing a low interest loan to eligible landowners through the RAA if declared under National Disaster Relief Assistance arrangements;
- In conjunction with the Department of Community Services (DoCS), providing assistance to primary producers suffering emergency-induced traumas; and
- Coordinating replacement of water used for controlling bushfires where taking the water has created an animal welfare problem or impacted on agricultural production.

When requests for fodder or material are received the appropriate form should be completed **(Appendix D)**.

7.1.1 COORDINATION OF FODDER RELIEF

In the first two or three days after the bushfire emergency NSW DPI may organise the supply and payment of emergency fodder for eligible stock owners. This is to provide for livestock on animal welfare grounds.

A register of people wishing to donate fodder or equipment must be kept at the LCC **(Appendix E)**.

A record of individual commercial fodder suppliers should be kept **(Appendix F)**. Each mob of sheep or cattle should receive enough hay to last them three days, as this allows the shy feeders to access sufficient feed.

Assuming that 22kg (50 lb) bales of good quality pasture hay are used, the following amounts are recommended:

- Dry Sheep 1 bale / 10 sheep / 3 days
- Lambing Ewes 1 bale / 5 ewes / 3 days
- Dry Cattle 1 bale / head / 3 days
- Cows and Calves 1.5 bales / head / 3 days

Adjust these rates accordingly if bales are significantly heavier, lighter or vary in quality.

A full maintenance ration may not be required if livestock are in good condition at the time of the fire. The tasking officers should discuss with each grazier their needs and situation. The above rates of feed should be recommended, but if the grazier disagrees a compromise should be reached.

7.1.2 EVACUATION OF LIVESTOCK

When staff are assisting with the evacuation of livestock they should always ask the owner if there are animal health reasons as to why the animals in question can not be evacuated (ie are they under detention for any disease).

Stock welfare is a priority in any emergency situation, but disease management should also be taken into consideration. Should an issue arise with diseased stock, reference should be made to [Circular AI 2002/02 Emergency Movement of Stock](#) which are under regulatory movement restrictions due to disease control on the NSW DPI internal website. Before moving diseased stock, Coordinators should contact the SCC to determine each case.

Records of evacuation points where livestock can be taken should be kept **(Appendix G)**. A register of total animals evacuated to each evacuation point should be kept **(Appendix S)** as well as individual animal registration forms **(Appendix H)**. Pet owners should be issued with an information sheet **(Appendix I)**.

A list of stock and feed carriers should be kept (**Appendix J**).

7.1.3 ASSESSMENT OF LIVESTOCK

The assessment of burnt livestock should be based on the information in [Assessing bushfire burns in livestock \(Primefact 399\)](#), which is available on the NSW DPI's external website.

A checklist for field teams listing resources to assist staff in assessment, destruction and disposal of livestock is given (**Appendix K**). The stock owner's responsibility in assessing burnt livestock under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* should be discussed. The stock owner is responsible for ensuring the welfare of their stock and should seek veterinary assistance as soon as possible in assessing and treating burnt livestock.

Information on requirements for [humane destruction and disposal of livestock \(Primefact 310\)](#) is available on the NSW DPI's external website.

7.1.4 CONSIDERATION OF REPLACING WATER USED FOR CONTROLLING BUSHFIRES

When water has been taken from properties for the control of bushfires, consideration may be given to replacing the water in situations where taking the water will create an animal welfare problem or will impact on agricultural production on the property. Before any water is replaced LCs should contact the SC to determine each case.

The combat agency in control of the bushfires, the RFS, is responsible for providing the LC with a log of the location of each water storage area and the volume of water removed from each water storage area. LCs should also arrange for an inspection of the site before replenishment programs commence.

7.1.5 PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO THE STATE CONTROLLER

The LC and DC should ensure that information on the scale of the bushfire and any damage or losses is forwarded to the SC as soon as possible. This information should include:

- Number of properties involved;
- Number of stock killed or injured;
- The area of country involved; and
- Damage to houses, sheds, fencing etc.

Accurate, early intelligence can be obtained by a reconnaissance flight, preferably in a fixed-wing aircraft. Authority for such a flight should be sought from the SC.

A **pro-forma for reporting losses** is given (**Appendix L**).

An Agriculture and Animal Services representative should be present at the daily briefings held at the RFS LECC, whether or not the representative is based in the centre.

7.1.6 RECOVERY FOLLOWING THE BUSHFIRE

Following the bushfire there will be a long process of recovery for the landowners involved. NSW DPI, in association with the LEMC, should organise initial recovery meetings at which advice on pasture regeneration and feeding livestock should be discussed, as well as the various forms of assistance which are available to landowners.

As the recovery process will be long term in duration it should be handed over completely to the LEMC, which may form a separate Bushfire Recovery Committee to meet on an 'as needs' basis for at least six months following the bushfire event. Also refer to section 6.5.

7.2 RESPONSE TO BUSHFIRE EMERGENCIES INVOLVING COMPANION ANIMALS

Under the *SERM Act 1989* and DISPLAN, the Agriculture and Animal Functional Area through NSW DPI has the responsibility for the care and welfare of all animals affected by an emergency. This includes companion animals such as dogs, cats and birds. LEMC representatives should develop and continually update local bushfire plans to assist in the management of companion animals affected by bushfire.

Bushfires occur in many regions and to varying degrees in NSW and their effects vary according to the topography and population in the region. The scope for companion animals to be involved in a bushfire is large. Generally owners of these animals ensure their safety and welfare, but occasionally NSW DPI is requested to assist in their rescue and care or if large-scale evacuations are required.

7.2.1 WHAT ASSISTANCE IS PROVIDED

The type of assistance provided by the NSW DPI and participating and supporting organisations can include, but is not limited to the following:

- Coordinating the rescue of companion animals from a bushfire and housing such animals. This may include the tasks of coordinating the tagging and recording of each animal's particulars such as owner, address, owners temporary address etc;
- Coordinating the transport of food to animals stranded by bushfires;
- Providing veterinary assistance to companion animals affected by bushfire emergencies; and
- Pet Industry Association of Australia (PIAA) can provide an early warning to industry operators (through the PIAA's database contact list), such as boarding kennels, catteries, veterinarian's and pet stores in any area of NSW, but are not able to provide on-going updates to regional areas. An early warning call from PIAA will enable operators to the work with local authorities for further information and assistance. Should this assistance be required, LC's should contact the SCC for PIAA contact numbers. LC's should then provide PIAA with information on the emergency situation for dissemination to the industry.

Information on [advice for pet owners during bushfire emergencies \(Primefact 398\)](#) is available on the NSW DPI's external website.

7.2.2 EVACUATION OF COMPANION ANIMALS

Where ever possible owners should be encouraged to take their companion animals with them when they are asked to evacuate. A local radio broadcast, pamphlet drop or doorknock arranged through the LEOC may be appropriate to inform owners of what to do with companion animals.

Records of evacuation points where companion animals can be taken should be kept (**Appendix G**). A register of animals evacuated at each evacuation point should be kept (**Appendix S**). Individual animal registration forms (**Appendix H**) must be completed and pet owners should be issued with an information sheet (**Appendix I**). Resources that may be required for an Evacuation Centre can be found in (**Appendix Q**). A role description for an Evacuation Centre Animal Services Officer can be found in section 15.8.

7.2.3 ACCOMODATION OF COMPANION ANIMALS

It is often possible to accommodate smaller animals like cats, dogs and birds at the same evacuation centre as their owners. This should be considered before making alternate arrangements. If accommodated with their owners, registration of pets can be done at the same time as the owners are registered into the evacuation centre. Liaise with DoCs to facilitate joint registration of pets and owners into an evacuation centre.

A number of alternatives may exist for accommodating companion animals rescued or evacuated from a bushfire. A local showground usually has many buildings and stables that may be quickly adapted and used to house horses, cattle, livestock, dogs and cats etc. When considering a showground ensure that it will remain safe from bushfire and accessible.

Other facilities that might be considered are local veterinary surgeries, boarding kennels and catteries. These facilities may be located in neighbouring towns or suburbs which are not at risk.

Food, water, bowls, feeding, cleaning, identification of the animals (suitable tagging that includes their owners details), owner contact details and the provision of veterinary care should be considered. If makeshift accommodation has to be constructed use of materials such as pallets, carpet and wire netting can be considered to ensure the animals' welfare and security. Enquiries should also be made regarding the availability of cages for companion animals and temporary panels for horses.

7.2.4 ORGANISATIONS THAT CAN BE CALLED ON FOR ASSISTANCE

A number of participating and supporting organisations may be available in each local area. It is also possible that none of these organisations are located in any one local area and alternative arrangements must be explored. These may include the local RSPCA, PIAA, Royal Agricultural Society, local cat or kennel clubs, trotting or racing club or showground trust.

Each LC must explore all avenues to ensure that companion animals in the area are adequately catered for.

7.3 RESPONSE TO BUSHFIRE EMERGENCIES INVOLVING WILDLIFE

Under the *SERM Act 1989* and DISPLAN the Agriculture and Animal Functional Area through NSW DPI has the responsibility for the care and welfare of all animals affected by an emergency, this includes wildlife such as kangaroos, koalas, reptiles, fish and birds. LEMC representatives should, if in a bushfire prone area, be aware that the NSW DPI may be requested to assist in the rescue and care of wildlife affected by a bushfire.

7.3.1 WHAT ASSISTANCE IS PROVIDED

The type of assistance provided by the NSW DPI and participating and supporting organisations can include, but is not limited to the following:

- Assist in coordinating the rescue of animals from bushfire affected areas and transporting them to an appropriate release sites;
- Assist in coordinating the feeding of wildlife stranded/affected by a bushfire in special situations; and
- Organising appropriate veterinary care for wildlife affected by a bushfire.

The amount of assistance that can be provided is sometimes very limited, depending on the scale and location of the bushfire.

Information on [caring for native animals after bushfires \(Primefact 404\)](#) is available on the NSW DPI's external website.

7.3.2 ACCOMODATION OF WILDLIFE

Accommodation of wildlife rescued from a bushfire 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.

7.3.3 ORGANISATIONS THAT CAN BE CALLED ON FOR ASSISTANCE

Participating and supporting organisations with the skills and expertise for handling wildlife include the RSPCA, WIRES, DEC and others. Endeavours to locate these or, if they are not located the region, other such organisations should be made and local arrangement made to cater for these animals affected by a bushfire.

8. ADMINISTRATION

The LC has the responsibility of supervising the LCC, this includes the initial setting up and the day to day administration and supervision of staff and resources. A number of areas require special mention, and include;

8.1 JOB/TASK RECORDING AND TRACKING

Requests for assistance should be recorded and tracked so that they can be monitored and handed over in roster changes.

- Task/resource requests should be recorded on the Task/Resource Request Form (**Appendix C**). When a job request is received a job number should be allocated with the appropriate coordination centre prefix;
- The task/resource requests should be logged on a log sheet or board. This could be electronic (spreadsheet displayed on the wall), paper or a whiteboard. **The task/resource log needs to be saved** for recording so a whiteboard with printing capability is better;
- The task/resource log sheet or board should include the job number, type, date received, status, who is responsible and date completed. A comments column may also be useful;
- As a task/resource is completed the task/resource request form and log should be completed for that task. The Task/Resource Request Form should be filed; and
- Part tasks are to remain active until the whole task is completed and written off.

8.2 SITUATION REPORTS (SITREPS)

Generally, the first Sitrep is required immediately a bushfire threat develops. Sitreps should highlight the magnitude of the problem and the estimated duration of the bushfire, the threat to livestock, companion animals and/or wildlife, the resources anticipated and what activities are undertaken. These should be sent to the DC and the SC so that NSW DPI Executive and the Minister can be kept informed of the developing threat.

Each Coordination Centre should develop a Sitrep with the preferred format being SMEAC:

- **Situation** (what is the overall situation and the Coordination Centre's position within the operation)
- **Mission** (objectives of the Coordination Centre)
- **Execution** (how the Coordination Centre will achieve the objectives)
- **Administration** (what logistics will support the Coordination Centre)
- **Command/Control/Coordination and Communication** (who is in charge, who reports to who, how and when will they report, what are the communication links)

Sitreps should be issued at 10:00 AM daily. These should be sent to the DC and SC, all appropriate participating and supporting organisations and RFS Emergency Operation Centres. The SC will collate the information and send it to the State Emergency Operations Centre (SEOC).

The Sitreps should indicate the number of tasks received and completed during the previous day, noting whether these tasks are new or a repeat task. Tasks for an individual landholder that manages a number of properties should, if possible, identify for which property the task is allocated, and whether it is a new or repeat task.

A generic SITREP can be found (**Appendix O**).

8.3 STAFF MATTERS

Staff employed in a Coordination Centre (local, district or state) are under the immediate supervision of the Coordinator for that centre and as such disregard their normal line management responsibilities.

Resourcing of these centres is the responsibility of the LC/DC/SC in conjunction with the appropriate logistics officer.

The Coordinators should monitor the activities of staff continually to ensure they do not become stressed to the point where they can no longer continue their duties. If staff do become stressed then they should receive appropriate counselling either from the Welfare Functional Area or NSW DPI's employee assistance program on **1800 337 068** .

A list of staff including contacts etc should be maintained in the form of a time sheet (**Appendix M**) which is used to log staff on and off duty for each day in a coordination centre. Staff should use the disaster management worksheet (**Appendix P**) as their timesheet during the emergency.

8.4 ROSTERING

It is important that staff at Coordination Centres are rostered efficiently. The Coordinator of the centre needs to ensure that staff are rostered efficiently taking into consideration such things as OH & S, staff welfare, workload, the type of work, individuals capabilities and conditions such as temperature. When altering staff there needs to be a period of up to one days cross over where the replacement can be adequately briefed/inducted on the current status of the event.

As staff rosters are updated they should be sent to all Coordination Centres so that contact boards at all centres can be kept up to date.

Each position should be nominated to at least two people so that rotation of staff can occur and thus prevent fatigue. An efficient roster system should be implemented. Staff must overlap for changeover to allow the replacement to be brought up to date by the outgoing person. Whether this overlap is several hours or a day is best left up to the individuals and the Coordinator.

8.5 OVERTIME

During a response to a bushfire there will normally be a need for staff to work long hours, including weekends, and not necessarily within the bandwidth. Before any overtime is worked, approval should be obtained from ASFAC for such overtime to be undertaken. An estimation of the amount of overtime that may be worked is required at least on a weekly basis.

8.6 USE OF VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers may form a major part of the NSW DPI's response to a bushfire. These people may be sourced from a number of organisations or private individuals. When volunteers are being used care must be taken not to endanger their safety, therefore adequate briefing/induction should take place before they commence.

8.6.1 FROM PARTICIPATING AND SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS

These organisations have agreements with ASFAC to assist in certain functions while responding to emergencies and have at their disposal a certain number of volunteers with certain skills and training. For example, the RSPCA in the larger cities has volunteers that would be able to assist with the evacuation and care of companion animals. The responsibility for volunteers from these organisations rests with their particular organisation.

LCs should be aware of, and make contact with, those organisations that are present in their local area so that appropriate plans can be prepared and ready for use in the case of a bushfire.

8.6.2 FROM OTHER SOURCES

Volunteers may also be available from organisations other than participating and supporting organisations, and individuals may also volunteer to assist. These people may be used to load fodder, feed animals etc.

These volunteers should be “signed on” when they are on duty, as they are the responsibility of NSW DPI. The NSW DPI should ensure that these volunteers are capable of doing the work, are adequately trained and using appropriately personal protective equipment. This is important as volunteer workers are provided with workers’ compensation cover under the *Workers’ Compensation Act 1987*.

All volunteers should show some form of appropriate verification of their identity and authority to work in the emergency ideally issued by their organisation before commencing work.

8.7 CATERING

Bushfires may require large numbers of staff to work long hours over a long period of time. It is important that these staff are adequately provisioned at the LCC whilst on duty to reduce the amount of time spent away from the centre.

8.8 ACCOMODATION

Accommodation can be divided into two parts, staff accommodation and Coordination Centre accommodation as outlined below:

8.8.1 STAFF ACCOMODATION

Staff may have to be accommodated in suitable accommodation near the centre, where meals are available early and late as daily start and finish times may not be within the normal bandwidth.

8.8.2 COORDINATION CENTRE ACCOMODATION

The Coordination Centres should be situated in a building or room large enough to accommodate the staff employed at the centre and the required equipment and furniture, which will vary according to the magnitude of the event. The centre must have adequate amenities such as toilets, kitchen and parking. It must have telephone and computer access. It may be appropriate to hire a cleaner or extend the cleaner’s hours to maintain the centre. Appropriate security should also be considered.

8.9 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY AND RISK ASSESSMENT

All managers and staff have a legislated responsibility to ensure a safe work place under the *NSW Occupational Health & Safety Act 2000* and *NSW Occupational Health & Safety Regulations 2001*. Staff operating in an emergency situation should be fully aware of their Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) responsibilities.

A key factor of OH&S is the identification of all potential risks at the work site. Staff familiar with the type of work and the work environment are best able to identify situations which may represent a danger to themselves or others and develop practical procedures to minimise that risk. The risk of harm or injury to staff may increase significantly in an emergency situation when staff are operating in unfamiliar areas and in high pressure situations. It is important that staff conduct a Risk Assessment (**Appendix T**) before commencing operations.

It is important that staff operating in emergency situations are inducted into the operation, work safely at all times, are adequately resourced to carry out their designated tasks and report/investigate any incidents that arise.

It is important that OH & S is addressed by all staff and managers. For further information on OH & S responsibilities and risk assessments please refer to the NSW DPI website at:

<http://intranet.dpi.nsw.gov.au/admin/ohs>

9. BUSHFIRE PREPAREDNESS

Part of the bushfire planning process is to ensure landholders are prepared for a possible bushfire season. DC's in consultation with the SC should prepare media releases at the start of the fire season urging landholders to take the necessary steps to protect their property and animals from bushfire. Appropriate material in [bushfire preparedness \(Primefact 403\)](#) and [risk management for stock owners in times of flood or fire \(Primefact 380\)](#) can be found on the NSW DPI's external website.

10. MEDIA

Before staff in control centres talk to the media they should seek approval from the SC.

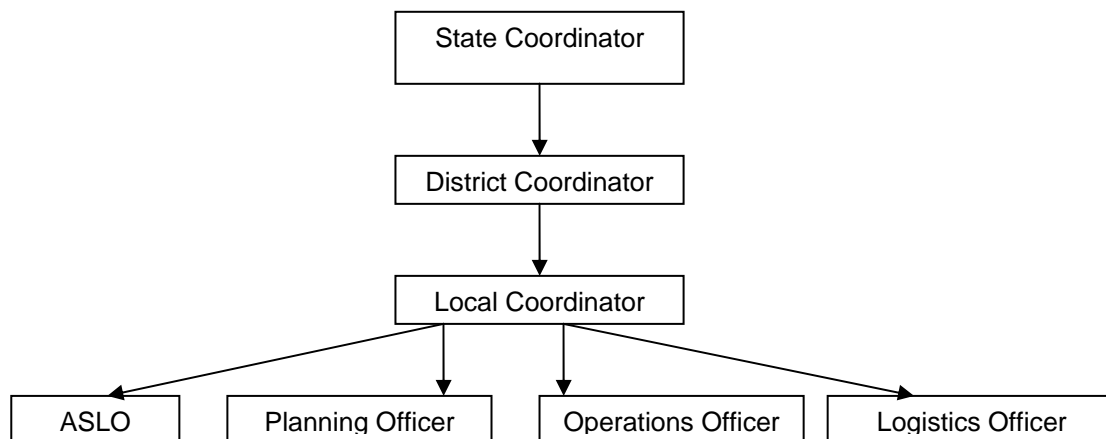
11. INFORMATION ON BUSHFIRE BEHAVIOUR

Information on bushfire behaviour is located at **Appendix N**.

12. STAFF JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Under emergency management's incident control system four functions exist within a control or coordination centre, these being control, operations, planning and logistics. A single person may undertake one or more of these functions depending on the scale of the emergency.

Operational Chain of Command



12.1 STATE COORDINATOR (SC)

- Advise alternate SCs of the situation and put on stand-by;
- Arrange for telephone/facsimiles at the SCC to be activated;
- Contact appropriate DCs and receive an update on the district situation;
- Warn and contact personnel from participating and supporting organisations likely to be involved of the situation;
- Obtain maps of areas likely to be affected including adjacent areas showing access routes. It may be necessary to contact the NSW DPI's Resource Information Unit for any missing maps;
- Contact SCC LO and request that the SCC be fully staffed and ready for operations;
- Contact and deploy LO to State Controller if necessary, and request them to arrange relief roster for that position;
- Discuss COP with DC and modify if necessary;
- Advise LO from participating and supporting organisations of the COP. LO should make contact with their organisations and be prepared to urgently meet the ASFAC's likely requirements;
- Depending on capability of DC and/or the State Emergency Control Operations Controller to adequately describe the emergency situation and level of agricultural resource requirements, arrange for surveillance of the emergency site by appropriate agricultural personnel. If possible, surveillance to be coordinated through the appropriate DC who, in turn, is under the control of the District Emergency Control Operation Controller;
- Pending advice from the DC and/or the State Emergency Operation Centre Controller of requirements for specific agricultural resources, anticipate such requirements and either (a) place on hold ready for immediate deployment or (b) where considered necessary, order immediate transport to the emergency site. Keep LO to SC informed of all such decisions/actions;
- Advise the DC of decisions made and actions taken, including details of likely arrival times, contacts, directions given etc; and
- Verify that the SCC SOP's are being followed.

12.2 DISTRICT COORDINATOR (DC)

- Is responsible to the SC;
- Ensure that all appropriate people have a copy of and are aware of *The Bushfire Operating Plan* and its contents;
- Immediately establish liaison with RFS, ideally by appointing a person to liaise between NSW DPI and RFS District Emergency Operation Centre (DEOC);
- Establish and maintain daily liaison with; RFS at Local, District and State level; State Controller and LCs;
- Develop and maintain liaison with other intelligence and support networks, especially RLPB Director(s) and/or staff and farmers representatives;
- With the assistance of the LC check availability of government and semi-government veterinarians and identify appropriate veterinary support;
- On advice from the LC of threat or damage, advise the Regional Director of Agriculture of the situation;
- Establish regular (invariably daily) review mechanisms. Requirements include provisions for: next 24 hrs, next 72 hrs, end of operations and report of daily activities, identifying any problems, work backlogs and reasons.
- Request a Sitrep from the LC as soon as possible and determine periods for regular updates;
- Provide support to the LC as requested;
- Undertake media interviews with approval from SC ;
- Continually evaluate staff performance and rosters, including the need for new staff; and
- Ensure staff do not take part in fire-fighting or other combatant duties unless: their private property or families are in danger; or they have specific approval of the appropriate DC; or they can provide specialised knowledge/equipment.

12.3 LOCAL COORDINATOR (LC)

The LC is responsible to the DC and carries out the following duties:

- Provide the DC with the names of support staff in their area to operate the LCC;
- Report to the DC, LEMO and attend LCC briefings;
- Provide Sitreps (**Appendix O**) on a regular basis to the DC;
- Prior to going on leave during the months of October to May should nominate a substitute LC and inform the appropriate DC;
- Establish and maintain close liaison with appropriate organisations such as RFS (combat agency), participating and supporting agencies and any other organisation;
- Ensure that all staff are aware of *The Bushfire Operating Plan*;
- Make a situation assessment, with knowledge obtained from local bushfire organisations, police or local knowledge and discuss with the appropriate DC;
- As soon as it is obvious that agriculture will be affected by a bushfire, determine resource requirements for an LCC (section 5.2) and look to establish it (preferably at the LEOC, local office of NSW DPI or RLPB);
- Advise DC, police, local government representatives, veterinary staff and participating and supporting organisations that a LCC has been established, and provide telephone numbers;
- Initially staff the LCC and ensure that all lines of communication remain open, beyond normal hours if necessary;
- Ensure communication is maintained from Local to District to State and to other participating and supporting agencies;
- Log all messages and check that appropriate action has been taken;
- As soon as sufficient information is available on the scale of the emergency, determine staffing needs in consultation with veterinary support staff and the DC;
- Pass to veterinary staff all reports of burnt livestock;
- Allocate one officer to every 10-15 affected landholders to assess requirements;
- Ensure that officers follow through all requirements of those landholders affected;
- Where necessary, liaise with relevant organisations, government departments, such as DoCs and RAA etc. in respect of needs of affected people;

- Arrange necessary media coverage and photographic record of events with regional staff;
- Manage staff appropriately. Staff rosters must be drawn up to minimise the occurrence of fatigue. These should be worked out between the officers themselves and the LC;
- Where necessary request welfare, fodder and any other requirements not available locally from appropriate DC; and
- Arrange for the distribution of donated fodder:
 1. advise media of fodder/agistment needs;
 2. have supplies of agistment/fodder information forms (**Appendices E and F**);
 3. record all offers of assistance;
 4. record individual requirements;
 5. match requirements and offers and inform both parties; and
 6. in special circumstances, arrange emergency transport of livestock/fodder.

12.4 ANIMAL SERVICES LIAISON OFFICER (ASLO)

The ASLO must:

- Be appointed by, and responsible to the LC;
- Liaise with the LC as required;
- Liaise closely to determine the operational requirements of Agriculture and Animals Services Functional Area from the RFS Emergency Operation Centre;
- Provide daily briefing to LEOCON and LC on Agriculture and Animal Services Functional Area operations;
- Provide information on damage/losses such as crops, stock, aquaculture and property to LC;
- Attend daily briefing session to inform relevant organisations of progress with agriculture and animal services bushfire relief operations;
- Attend to miscellaneous matters referred RFS Controller; and
- Provide a daily report to the LCC on the latest bushfire predictions and any emerging problems.

12.5 PLANNING OFFICER (PO)

The PO is responsible for managing planning activities should not leave the Coordination Centre while on duty. They:

- Are responsible to the LC;
- Implement planning objectives and strategies to ensure effective and efficient running of operations;
- Gather/disseminate information on the current and projected situation, such as weather forecasts;
- Prepare Sitreps;
- Prepare mapping as appropriate;
- Assist the LC to implement a response to the emergency; and
- Collect and collate all operational records.

12.6 OPERATIONS OFFICER (OO)

The Operations Officer is responsible for managing operational activities should not leave the coordination centre while on duty. They must:

- Ensure tasks/jobs are set according to priority;
- Ensure task/job request forms and log sheets are complete and accurate;
- Ensure tasks/jobs are correctly identified as to whether they are new or repeat tasks; and
- Ensure tasks are numbered sequentially and include a prefix that identifies the particular local coordination centre eg. "W" for Walgett.

