

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

# Livestock safety in emergencies

February 2019

Fire, flood and other emergencies can impact you, your property and your animals at any time. Impacts can limit access to your property, affect utilities such as water and electricity, or leave you isolated or requiring evacuation.

Safety of your animals is your responsibility. Being prepared for emergencies is crucial to a positive outcome for you and your animals.

### Are you at risk?

If your property is at risk from bushfires and/or floods you should develop plans of action in advance.

Emergency planning information is available from your local NSW RFS brigade, NSW SES unit, council and Local Land Services. Neighbours and regional historical records may help determine if your property is at risk.

Don't forget agisted animals. Talk with the landholder about risk and establish a plan.

### Preparing for the worst

Property emergency plans should include your livestock. In an emergency, having a plan will reduce stress, allow clearer thinking and improve the chances of keeping you and your livestock safe.

When planning for emergencies consider:

- Can you sufficiently care for your stock for 3-7 days, or longer in a prolonged flood?
- Are your feed/fodder supplies sufficient, safe and accessible for your livestock?
- Do you have a safe place on your property for livestock if they cannot be relocated?
- Are animal houses/sheds protected?
- Are your livestock identifiable e.g. brands, NLIS?
- Can you relocate or move your animals quickly? What safe transport options and routes do you have (including backup options)? If not, what are the alternatives to moving them?
- Do you have basic medical supplies and rescue equipment?
- Do you have alternative water and power sources?

- Are your water supplies protected from fire or flood?
- Can property biosecurity be maintained?
- Do you have access to up to date communications (e.g. radio, Apps)?
- Can a neighbour or friend enact your plan if you are not home?

You should practice your plan to test it works and ensure staff, friends and family are aware of it.

**Determine triggers.** Good planning includes deciding on different triggers that will activate it such as fire danger ratings or flood height predictions.

**Identification** of animals is important, especially if they become lost, and can include ear tags, branding and ear tattoos. Temporary or additional methods in an emergency include stock markers or chalk paint.

Copies of stock information and identification, proof of ownership, and photographs of valuable animals stored in your household/business emergency kit or accessible online will also assist.

**Hazard reduction** on and around your property is essential. Keeping it well maintained all year round will help mitigate unforeseen events. Local emergency service groups are a source of advice.

**Identify and prepare a "safe" area** on your property where livestock can be located away from danger with access to food and water, as evacuation may not be possible or practical. Multiple access points are beneficial. Utilising your "safe" area when you're not at the property will improve the safety of your animals. Examples of safe areas can include:

For fire:

- a large heavily grazed/ploughed paddock or several with internal gates locked open (to allow livestock to escape/run during through a fire)
- large, clear stockyards
- fire breaks of at least 6m width
- fire retardant hedges on at least two windward sides
- large dam with earth mounded on minimum 2 fireward sides (do not allow flammable vegetation to grow on mounds).

For flood:

- high ground or a purpose built **mound** with adequate water and feed supplies/storage
- open areas with limited structures or barbed fencing to get caught in or trapped within.

**Emergency checklists** will ensure you have the necessary resources available and their location identified for urgent access. A basic list may include:

- water and feed for at least 3-7 days, including any special dietary needs
- basic medications and applicators
- documentation and photographs
- animals first aid supplies
- wire cutters and a sharp knife
- list of emergency numbers including vet, Local Land Services and agricultural supply store
- firearm to euthanise severely injured livestock
- generator
- water pump

Access to a veterinarian or other assistance may be limited during an emergency so it is important you have the necessary resources available.

**Identify multiple relocation sites** with adequate paddocks/facilities and establish agreements/plans. Identify all transport routes from your property.

**Infrastructure planning**, especially for intensive livestock systems (e.g. poultry, pigs) that cannot be evacuated, minimise risk by building on higher ground, preparing adequate fire-breaks, using suitable building materials and installing fire-protection systems.

## Act early

Put your plan into action early to protect your livestock. This will give you time to deal with unforeseen problems. Do not wait for emergency warnings – they may come too late.

Animals may behave differently in an emergency, potentially making them difficult to handle or load. Relocating them early will minimise this issue.

## Relocating your livestock

Plan in advance which animals you will relocate and ensure you have adequate yard and loading facilities with access for transport. Ensure you have access to a suitable transport vehicle(s). Commercial carriers may not be available at short notice.

Do not risk the safety of yourself, others or your animals by driving, walking or riding through flood waters or active fire-zones.

## Animals remaining on the property

- Ensure all resources are in an accessible and known location.
- Fill all water troughs and any additional containers. Do not rely on automatic systems.
- Activate infrastructure safety plans for housed livestock.
- If a “safe area” is unavailable, clip or wire open internal gates or cut internal fencing to give animals opportunity to escape danger. Never let animals loose on roads.
- Turn off any power sources that may increase risk e.g. electrical fences, power to buildings.

## After a natural disaster emergency

- Do a thorough search of the property to assess livestock and assets.
- Check for any injuries and seek veterinarian advice or assistance immediately if required.
- Ensure your livestock are safely contained, which may require temporary fencing or relocation.
- Ensure adequate food and fresh water is available and not contaminated.
- Buildings impacted by flood or storm damage should be cleaned, aired to dry out and may need to be disinfected.
- Monitor for and treat symptoms of pest or disease.

Be mindful of any hazards that could impact your livestock, including hot or boggy ground. If they have been relocated, do not bring them home until the area is safe.

Use experiences gained from implementing or testing your plan to continually improve it.

During and after a natural disaster, Local Land Services provide a range of support and advice to landholders including animal welfare, carcass disposal, missing stock, damage assessment, emergency fodder, pasture management etc. Contact Local Land Services on 1300 795 299.

Experiencing emergencies can impact on your physical and mental health. [Engage with your community and seek help](#) to ease your burden.

## More information

NSW Department of Primary Industries – [Community information for floods and bush fires](#)

Local Land Services – [Emergency information](#)

NSW RFS [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au)

NSW SES [www.ses.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ses.nsw.gov.au)