

Livestock movements in emergencies – NLIS and General Biosecurity Duty

Livestock welfare is a priority in any emergency situation. The National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) requirements are crucial to the traceability of livestock in emergency situations such as natural disasters like bushfires and floods.

This procedure outlines how the NLIS requirements and the General Biosecurity Duty (GBD) can be met in emergency livestock movement situations caused by bushfire, flood, or other emergencies.

Who should read this?

- NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI), an office within the Department of Regional NSW
- Local Land Services (LLS) staff in their roles as authorised officers under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* (the Act)
- District Registrars under the NLIS Regulation.

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Scope:

This procedure relates to all identifiable stock (cattle, sheep, goats and pigs) included in the Biosecurity (National Livestock Identification System) Regulation 2017 (the NLIS Regulation).

This procedure is applicable to NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI), an office within the Department of Regional NSW, and Local Land Services (LLS) staff in their roles as authorised officers under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* (the Act), and District Registrars under the NLIS Regulation.

Management of the biosecurity risk

The purpose of this procedure is to provide advice on how National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) requirements are to be applied in emergency situations such as natural disasters like bushfires and floods.

In emergency situations such as bushfires, floods or other natural disasters, livestock may have to be moved quickly due to the need to:

- remove stock from actual or possible danger

- secure stock where fences have been burned or washed away
 - access feed through agistment
 - rehome strayed stock.
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Biosecurity legislation summary

The National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) underpins access of Australian livestock products to international markets. NLIS allows for traceability of livestock through a combination of permanent identifiers, movement documents and database records.

The NLIS database holds information on livestock movements from birth to slaughter, to protect and enhance Australia's reputation as a producer of animal products that are free of chemical residues and exotic diseases.

NLIS devices with a Property Identification Code (PIC) are required to be attached to all livestock and all properties with livestock should have a PIC.

In NSW the NLIS is supported by the Biosecurity (NLIS) Regulation 2017,, which forms the NLIS regulatory framework. The NLIS is endorsed and supported by all sectors of the cattle, sheep and goat and pig industries including producer, stock and station agent, saleyard, feedlot and processor peak industry bodies.

Any person who deals with cattle, sheep, goats and pigs and who knows or ought to know of the biosecurity risks associated with these livestock has a general biosecurity duty to take measures to prevent, eliminate or minimise the risk as far as is reasonably practicable. This is called the general biosecurity duty and is met by following the NLIS Regulation, Industry Standards or by following other advisory or education material.

The collection, use and disclosure of information in accordance with this procedure, including any internal or external discussion or distribution of information, must be in compliance with the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* or be exempted by the operation of section 387 of the Act.

Section 387 (2) of the Act provides authority for the disclosure of information about a person, without the consent of the person: to a public sector agency, or to any other person, but only if the disclosure is reasonably necessary for the purpose of exercising a biosecurity risk function.

Work health and safety

The *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* places an obligation on the agency (NSW DPI and LLS) as a person conducting a business or Undertaking, and workers, to provide a safe and healthy workplace. Safe Work Method Statements that support activities included in this procedure must be used in identifying, assessing and controlling risks.

NSW DPI and LLS will work together to create a safe and supportive work environment when undertaking any activities for this procedure.

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1. Livestock movements in emergencies

1.1 Welfare considerations

Livestock welfare is a priority in any emergency situation. Where possible, the decision whether to move livestock between properties in an emergency resides with the respective owners of the stock and the properties.

1.2 NLIS requirements in emergencies

It is a requirement under the NLIS Regulation that the owner of any identifiable stock (cattle, sheep, goats and pigs) must ensure the stock are properly identified with a permanent identifier before leaving any property on which they are kept.

If an emergency situation is threatening the property where identifiable stock are kept, stock may be moved without being properly identified and without a stock permit issued by LLS or a permit granted under the Act.

The [Group Biosecurity Permit 'NLIS Emergencies'](#) is available on the (DPI) website for when stock are moved in emergencies.

The Group Permit authorises movements that would or might contravene a requirement imposed by or under the Act under normal circumstances. If stock is located on a property affected by an emergency and the emergency necessitates their urgent movement to another property in order to protect the stock, the Group Permit applies and an individual permit is not required.

Unidentified stock moved due to an emergency must be 'properly identified' as soon as is practicable after they arrive at the property of refuge. This is not necessary if they are returned directly to the original property from which they were moved within 7 days.

The owner of the identifiable stock must make a record of the emergency movement using an NLIS movement document. If possible, the movement of the stock to the refuge property should be recorded in the NLIS database.

Unidentified stock leaving the property of refuge and moving back to their original property within 7 days can be moved unidentified in accordance with a stock permit issued by LLS or a permit granted under the Act.

Stock which cannot be properly identified and moves from the property of refuge to sale, slaughter or another property, e.g. for agistment, must:

- be identified with a post-breeder device for the refuge property if possible, or
- be identified with an 'emergency' post-breeder device obtained from LLS

before they leave the refuge property. The movement must also be recorded on the NLIS database and the stock accompanied by an NLIS movement document.

The following actions should be taken by an authorised officer or animal welfare inspector with cattle that are euthanased for animal welfare reasons:

- If the cattle have NLIS devices and are disposed of on the same property, their devices should be read and uploaded as 'DECEASED' to the NLIS database. This is optional and might not be practical if large numbers are involved, or tags are damaged (e.g. by fire), or if the cattle have been euthanised on another property.
- The NLIS database function Mob-based movement for cattle may be used by State Department of Agriculture (SDA) Heavy or Medium accounts, assigned to DPI and LLS officers, to record movements of cattle from and to any PIC during emergency situations. This function negates the

need for scanning individual identified cattle and may assist authorised officers in recording cattle moved in emergency situations.

2. General Biosecurity Duty (GBD)

GBD is a key principle of the Act and prohibits some high-risk activities and materials. There is also a general obligation on people to be aware of their surroundings and take action to prevent the introduction and spread of pests, diseases, weeds and contaminants.

When livestock are under any regulatory movement restrictions due to the presence of disease, this must be taken into account when determining their destination in an emergency. Where alternative options for movement are available, disease management should be taken into consideration.

Where stock are moved from or to a holding subject to a biosecurity direction, the status of the stock or the holding may be affected. It is important that people involved in an official capacity with the emergency movement of stock are informed of the disease status of the stock to assist in managing the biosecurity risk associated with their movement.

If not determined prior to the emergency movement, the LLS Biosecurity officer is required to undertake a risk assessment to resolve the disease status of livestock or land where an emergency movement has involved a holding and animals subject to a biosecurity direction.

Definitions and acronyms:

- **Emergency situations:** for the purpose of this procedure means natural disasters such as floods and bushfires
- **GBD:** General Biosecurity Duty required under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*
- **LLS:** Local Land Services
- **NLIS:** National Livestock Identification System
- **NLIS movement document:** includes a Livestock Production Assurance (LPA), National Vendor Declaration (NVD) for the relevant species, a transported stock statement (TSS), a stock permit granted under the *Local Land Services Act 2013*, and a permit granted under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*.
- **Properly identified:** means as described in clause 17 of the Biosecurity (NLIS) Regulation 2017, and includes attaching a permanent identifier (an NLIS accredited breeder or post-breeder device) to cattle, sheep, goats or pigs on the property to which the PIC on the tag relates, or additionally a permanent brand identifier for pigs.
- **SDA:** State Department of Agriculture

Documentation:

- Biosecurity Act 2015
- Biosecurity (NLIS) Regulation 2017
- Policy - Biosecurity collection, use and disclosure of information
- Policy - Information Security (IND-I-197)
- Policy – Code of Ethics and Conduct
- Procedure - Biosecurity collection, use and disclosure of information

Records

Revision history:

Version	Date issued	Notes	By
1	24 April 2020	N/A	N/A
1.1	April 2023	Update to new template plus some minor changes to content as part of NSW DPI website uplift project	Manager Traceability, Animal Biosecurity

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