

Animals and bushfires

Pets and bushfires

Whether pets are at home with you, relocated during high fire-risk days or brought along on holidays, you need to plan and prepare for their safety as well as your family's and your own.



Keep your pets safe

- ▶ **Have a plan**
- ▶ **Prepare a bushfire relocation kit**
- ▶ **Treat injuries and heat stress**
- ▶ **Tips for keeping pets cool**

Plan for your pets

Decide whether you will keep your pets with you or move them elsewhere during high fire-risk days. Include these details in your Bushfire Survival Plan.

Remember, on Code Red days the safest place to be is away from high-risk bushfire areas.

- ▶ If you choose to keep your pets with you, confine them early. Pets are safest inside a secure room, on a lead or in carriers.
- ▶ Make sure you have wet towels and woollen blankets available to cover and protect your pets.
- ▶ Make sure they have plenty of water to drink.
- ▶ Make sure your pets are microchipped or wearing a collar identification tag at all times. Ensure all contact information is current.
- ▶ Include an emergency contact outside your area that is linked to your pets' records.
The National Pet Register provides free identification for cats and dogs.
- ▶ Make a list of where you could house your pets if you decide to leave early. This may include boarding kennels, a relative/friend's place or you may be able to keep them with you.
- ▶ Discuss with neighbours about protecting your pets if you are not at home during a bushfire. Keep in regular contact with your neighbours during the fire danger period to let them know your plans.
- ▶ Keep your Bushfire Relocation Kit for pets within easy reach so you are ready to leave early.
- ▶ Practise how you will move your pets if you leave. It takes longer than you think.

Pet Bushfire Relocation Kit

Relocate your pets to a safer area early on high-risk days. Consider a boarding facility if you do not have friends or family in safer areas who can care for your pet.

If you relocate with your pets, make sure they are secured with a collar and lead or confined in a carrier. Make sure the carriers are clearly labelled with your contact details.

Your Pet Bushfire Relocation Kit should include:

- ▶ food and water
- ▶ a bowl for each pet
- ▶ a second collar and lead
- ▶ a carrier for cats and smaller pets
- ▶ bedding and a woollen blanket
- ▶ a pet first-aid kit – seek your vet's advice
- ▶ a favourite toy
- ▶ any medications, along with a written list of what they are
- ▶ your pet's medical history, including proof of vaccination
- ▶ your vet's contact details.

Pet injuries and heat stress

If your pets have suffered burn injuries during a fire, they must receive immediate treatment. Take your pets to the nearest vet clinic or animal shelter as soon as it is safe to do so.

Hot weather

Heat stress in dogs and cats occurs when they are unable to maintain their normal body temperature on a hot day.

On all hot days, especially days of Severe, Extreme or Code Red fire danger, keep your pets as cool as possible.

Keeping your pets comfortable on a hot day is your responsibility.

Look for the warning signs:

excessive panting

salivating

pets that whine or seem agitated.

In cases of severe heat stress or heat stroke, pets may stop panting and vomit.

If your pet shows these symptoms, consult a vet immediately. Keep your vet's contact details in your Bushfire Survival Plan.

Tips for keeping pets cool

Have fresh, cold water available at all times

Ensure your pet has shade at all times or bring them inside into a cool room

Wipe your pet down with a cool, damp towel or leave wet towels out for them to lie on

Wet your dog with cool water several times throughout the day

Consider buying a wading pool for your dog

For cats, rub damp hands over their coat or along their tummy

Place ice blocks in your pet's water bowl

Place ice in a pillow case and place it near your pets

Consider having your dog clipped if their coat is long and thick

Never leave your pets in a vehicle on a hot day.

Animals and bushfires

Horses and bushfires

Whether your horses are located at home or on an agistment property you must plan and prepare for their safety.



- ▶ **Horses need a large open space to avoid bushfires**
- ▶ **Move your horses to a safer location before fire threatens your property**
- ▶ **Remove all gear, including rugs**
- ▶ **Seek treatment for burns quickly**

Safe places for your horses

Horses are quite good at avoiding bushfire if:

- ▶ they have enough room to move freely in a large open space
- ▶ there is minimal vegetation in the large open space

On Severe, Extreme or Code Red fire danger days, move your horses to a designated safer paddock or area. This may be:

- ▶ a large well-grazed paddock
- ▶ a series of smaller paddocks with the internal gates left open
- ▶ a large sand ménage, provided there are no buildings or vegetation close-by that could catch fire.

Ideally the paddock should have a dam in it where the horse can seek relief from the heat.

Do not lock your horses in a stable, holding yard or similar environment. The horse may panic and hurt themselves if confined.

Do not let your horses out on the roads as they will be in more danger from traffic and fire.

A horse's natural instinct is to run from danger including bushfire and they will quickly move to burnt ground to survive.

Ensure your property has a Property Identification Code (PIC) registered with the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) that indicates horses are there.

If your property isn't safe

Move your horses to a safer location before fire threatens your property. Once a fire has started, it is unlikely you will be able to safely move your horses to another location. Bushfires can travel quickly and roads will be dangerous, or possibly closed.

Agist your horses out of the area during summer (Fire Danger Period)

Develop your plan to temporarily move your horses on Severe, Extreme or Code Red days to:

- A neighbour or friend's property
- Local showgrounds
- Saleyards
- Racetracks
- Pony club grounds

Arrange a group strategy with friends, other agistees or club members. If you agist your horses, find out what the bushfire plan is for the property.

Prepare your horses

On **Severe**, **Extreme** or **Code Red** fire danger days remove all gear, including rugs, from your horses. Some gear may melt or become very hot and cause serious burns, or get caught on fences.

Permanently identify your horses by microchipping or branding them. If your horse is difficult to catch, consider leaving a leather halter on with identification tags.

After the fire

Horses tend to recover well after a fire. They may suffer facial burns and swollen eyelids. Seek appropriate treatment to restore them to full health quickly.

A horse suffering from burns requires prompt veterinary attention. Until the vet arrives, you can:

- sponge affected areas with cold water
- if legs are affected, try standing your horse in a bucket of water
- Any first-aid administered should be anti-inflammatory.