

# Livestock and fires

## A GUIDE FOR FARMERS



[cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfa.vic.gov.au)

## Your livestock is also your livelihood

Managing livestock during a bushfire can be challenging especially when large areas of your farm are burning. The aftermath of a bushfire can also be heartbreaking when you encounter injured livestock and stock losses, along with a loss of stock feed and fencing.

### Plan and prepare for fire

There are steps you can take to make your livestock as safe as you can during bushfires, and it all starts with your farm plan.

Prepare an emergency plan that covers major disasters ahead of the fire season and communicate it to everyone in your family and people who work on your farm. This plan should include which animals you intend to evacuate and which you will leave behind. It should also identify evacuation routes, vehicles and destinations.

Ensure your National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) tags, Property Identification Codes (PIC) and microchip details are all current.

Your plan should consider what you'll do before and during the fire season to ensure the safety of your livestock. It should include property preparation, plans for high-risk days and what to do if a fire occurs. Pull together an emergency kit and place it in a prominent place. For horses and similar livestock your kit should contain;

- ▶ two to three days of food, water, halters, leads, rugs, a first aid kit, medications and relevant documentation.

### 'Safe' paddock

Create a 'safe' paddock to provide a place to where you can move your livestock and provide a better chance of them surviving. A 'safe' paddock is one that:

- ▶ is large enough for livestock to move freely,
- ▶ is easy to access and well fenced,
- ▶ has adequate water supply without relying on electric pumps,
- ▶ is kept green or grazed hard to reduce the fuel load, and
- ▶ is not surrounded by thick vegetation, trees, long grass or haystacks.



**The work you do before a fire will help you protect your investment and livelihood.**



## Containment area for after a fire

Create a containment area on a carefully selected part of the property that is set up to hold, feed and water your core livestock after a fire. The area should be maintained and available during emergencies.

If your property isn't safe for your livestock you might want to consider agisting them out of the area during summer or moving them on Extreme or Catastrophic fire danger days.

## Before a fire threatens

Act quickly to move your livestock to your designated safe paddock or another safe place well before the fire reaches your property. Once a fire starts you won't be able to move them safely.

Moving stock after a fire has started is dangerous as you drive through thick smoke, fallen trees, powerlines and face the threat of collisions or being trapped in fire. The safer option is to leave early and protect yourself and your animals.

For the livestock you intend to evacuate, move them early in the day or shift them to the safe paddock. Animals should be clearly identified in case you're separated. For the animals remaining on your property, prepare a low-risk area. Move stock early in the day to these areas as some can be scared by the smoke and heat. Fill water troughs and put out enough feed to last five days. Fences alongside roads should not be cut because loose livestock can cause accidents, a bad outcome for road users and your livestock.

## After the fire

If your animals are injured seek veterinary attention immediately. If your livestock is lost notify your local council, microchip registry, neighbours and local animal shelters. Social media can be a good source of information about lost or found animals and to find emergency feed, water, agistment and other helpful resources.

## Checklist

- Include your livestock in your emergency plan
- Ensure all your animals are identified and their microchip, NLIS and PIC details are current
- Determine which animals you will evacuate and which you will leave behind
- Prepare an emergency kit and place it in a prominent place
- Identify where you will evacuate your stock
- Identify your evacuation routes
- Ensure the animals you plan to evacuate are accustomed to travel and the transport is well maintained
- Prepare and maintain a low-risk area on your property for livestock being left behind
- Remove equipment that may burn livestock, such as halters and blankets
- Prepare a containment area, food, water and shelter for livestock after the fire
- Ensure emergency first aid equipment for animals is easily accessible

## Further information

Agriculture Victoria

[agriculture.vic.gov.au](https://agriculture.vic.gov.au)

Country Fire Authority

[cfa.vic.gov.au](https://cfa.vic.gov.au)

## Contact

VicEmergency Hotline **1800 226 226** (or via National Relay Service on **1800 555 677** if hearing impaired).

Translating and Interpreting Service for translated information from VicEmergency call **131 450**.

Dial **000** if you see smoke, flame or embers.