

## MANAGING ANIMALS IN DISASTERS

Your animals are your responsibility. It is up to you to plan ahead and to prepare for the safety and welfare of your pets, livestock or other farm animals well before a natural hazard affects your home or farm. By acting early, you will avoid unnecessary danger and anxiety. Although individual needs will vary, the following advice is intended to help you decide the best plan for your circumstances and region.

### INCLUDE YOUR ANIMALS IN HOUSEHOLD OR FARM EMERGENCY PLANS:

Consider whether you will move your pets and other animals to a safer place on days of high risk or when a warning is issued. This will depend on whether you intend to stay or leave.

Check with your local council or other agencies about likely hazards, local emergency plans and what arrangements are in place regarding temporary animal shelters and yards in times of major emergencies or disasters.

Remember that most evacuation centres will not accept animals (Guide dogs excepted). Those that do may require proper identification and proof of vaccination.

Regardless of your plan, ensure that pets and animals are properly identified (eg name tag, microchip or brand) and that stock registers are current and kept in a safe place.

Include these phone numbers in your emergency plan:

- Your vet.
- Local animal welfare agency.
- Pet information and advisory services.
- Help for Injured or trapped native animals (eg wildlife ranger, animal rescue service etc).

The EMA brochure *'Emergency! A step by step guide to what you need to know and do'* (available through your State/Territory Emergency Service or via Internet: [www.ema.gov.au](http://www.ema.gov.au)) can assist you develop your plan.

### ON DAYS OF HIGH RISK DURING THE FLOOD, BUSHFIRE, SEVERE STORM OR CYCLONE SEASONS, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

If moving animals to a safer place, do so early to avoid unnecessary risk to you and your animals. Remember that late evacuation can be very dangerous.

If staying at home, or on the farm, or planning to return when a warning is issued, you may need to bring pets in early as they have instincts about dangerous conditions and may run away if afraid. Keep them indoors and separated in a quiet room with small, or preferably, no windows (provide food and water, but do not try to comfort them as you may transfer your anxiety).

If you are likely to be away from home or your farm while an emergency warning is current, you may need put your emergency plan into action and take precautions referred to in this brochure before you leave.

## CARING FOR PETS

If moving pets to a safer place before a potential emergency

If pets are likely to be at risk, every effort should be made to arrange to take them to a safer area in advance. This might be with relatives, friends, animal boarding facilities or to a temporary animal shelter or evacuation centre which accepts animals.

*Make sure that you supply:*

- sufficient non-perishable pet food for several days and feed/water bowls;
- a leash (possibly a muzzle) or a carry-cage, bag or box;
- toilet litter or old newspapers;
- essential medications and first aid kit; and
- pets' medical history and vet contact details.

*Allow for the special needs of some animals:*

- Carry birds, rabbits, guinea pigs, mice etc in cages or pillowcases (tied firmly) or in secure boxes with small airholes.
- Put fish in a large wide-necked jar with a secure lid. Fill jar two-thirds with water. When travelling, regularly blow through a straw into the water to aerate it. Remove lid when stationary.
- Frogs need a small covered tub with 2.5cm (1 inch) of water in the bottom and airholes in the top.
- Snakes and lizards need to be put in a container with a secure lid and airholes, or a sack/pillowcase.
- As poultry and aviary birds are affected by smoke, make a hessian curtain to fit the cage. To use, drop the curtain and wet down.

If evacuating and absolutely unable to take your pets

The RSPCA advises that animals should only be left behind when it is impossible to move them in advance or to take them with you. The Society further advises that if animals have to be left and are in danger of suffering a painful death, owners should humanely 'put them down' where possible. If you do leave them, at least take these precautions:

- If possible leave your pets indoors.
- If they have to be left outside do not tie them up.
- Place pets (separated) in rooms with small or preferably no windows (use easily cleaned areas eg laundry, bathroom, toilet). Avoid rooms with hazards such as large windows, hanging plants or large picture frames.
- Provide adequate food and water in large heavy bowls that can't be tipped over. (A slow-dripping tap can supply a constant source of water).
- Birds must eat daily so provide food dispensers that regulate the amount of food.
- In the case of flood, position a heavy chair or crate to allow access to higher refuge such as benches, vanity units or shelves where adequate food and water should be left.
- Provide toilet litter where appropriate and separate bedding for each pet.
- Make sure all pets are properly identified.
- Tell a friend or relative where you can be contacted, where your pets are and what their needs are.
- Leave a note for the emergency services indicating what animals they will encounter in the home (how many, where and how you can be contacted).

## CARING FOR LIVESTOCK AND OTHER FARM ANIMALS

Develop an emergency plan and consider the following:

- Check whether local arrangements cater for relocation of livestock.
- Coordinate relocation of domestic animals and livestock with neighbours, friends or livestock associations as early as possible.
- Fit gates on internal fences to avoid moving stock along public roads.
- Mark gates and water locations on a map of your property. Have this map available in case someone has to move stock for you.
- If an emergency warning is current, or on days of high risk, consider moving stock into a safe area before leaving your property for any length of time.
- In a bushfire, move animals to a closely grazed or ploughed paddock (preferably around the homestead) with drinking water, steel fencing and preferably shade. (Poultry etc can be placed in a temporary pen).
- In a flood, move animals to high ground with adequate natural feed. Additional feed may be required for stock stranded for extended periods.
- In a severe storm (including hail) or a cyclone, place animals under solid cover if possible (eg sturdy barn/ shed or covered pen).
- In extreme circumstances, the best option may be to cut fences so that stock can escape danger (and be collected later).

#### AFTER A DISASTER

Because surroundings will have changed following a disaster, animals can be disoriented, frightened or aggressive. So take care when releasing them and do so in a confined area to avoid their escape.

For missing animals check with pounds, shelters, animal control authorities and boarding facilities. (A recent photograph of your pets will help identify them).

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information on managing animals in disasters, contact your local department of agriculture, local council, emergency service, RSPCA, your veterinarian or visit the EMA web site: [www.ema.gov.au](http://www.ema.gov.au).

#### OTHER HINTS AND TIPS

- Don't leave animals in vehicles.
- In hot conditions provide more than one bowl of water (in case of spillage).
- In case of fire, aviaries should be equipped with overhead sprinklers to minimise smoke inhalation, cool the air and reduce the chance of burn injuries.
- Report details of injured native animals.

Produced by EMA in close consultation with the RSPCA, the Australian Veterinary Association and relevant State and Territory emergency management agencies through the National Community Awareness Advisory Group.