



Prepare your horse for bush fire



PREPARE. **ACT.** **SURVIVE.**





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Jeff Herbert / Newspix



PREPARE a plan to protect your horse and your family

During bush fires, people put themselves and others at risk attempting to rescue horses at the last minute. Some refuse to evacuate or go to a safe place because of concern about their animals.

Last minute decisions can lead to horses being let loose on the road, putting the horses in significant danger and creating a hazard for vehicles and emergency services.

PREPARE A BUSH FIRE SURVIVAL PLAN

Give everyone, including your horse, the best chance of survival by preparing a Bush Fire Survival Plan with your family. If your property is well prepared and you are prepared, your horse will have a better chance of surviving a bush fire event.

Discuss your plan with your neighbours and other horse owners in your area. You might make an

arrangement with friends who have horses to look after each others animals if there is a fire and one of you is away.

Everyone that lives, works or agists on your property should be aware of your plan and understand when to put it into action. Review and update your Bush Fire Survival Plan on a regular basis.



REMEMBER
Leaving early is
the safest option for you
and your horse.

IF I LEAVE MY HOME EARLY TO SURVIVE A BUSH FIRE, WILL I ...

MOVE MY HORSE TO A SAFER PLACE AWAY FROM MY PROPERTY?

Your property may not have a safe place to keep your horse when a bush fire threatens.

Have a list of possible places to take your horse. You will need more than one, as roads may be closed or conditions may change and your preferred location may no longer be safe.

There may not be fenced yards where you take your horse, so you must plan for this.

Allow more time if you have made an arrangement to help someone else with their horse.



Options for safer places to take a horse may include:

- showgrounds
- saleyards
- racetracks
- pony club grounds
- public reserves
- property of family or friends.



IF I DECIDE TO STAY AND DEFEND MY PROPERTY, OR, I'M UNABLE TO LEAVE

DO I ...

HAVE A SAFER PLACE FOR MY HORSE ON MY PROPERTY?

The risk of injury to, or death of horses during a bush fire can be reduced by preparing and maintaining an area onto which horses can be moved and secured.

This area should be maintained throughout the year.

PHOTO: Julane Bowen

A safer place is:

- a large cleared paddock (or two connected paddocks with the internal gates open)
- irrigated pasture
- a well fenced sand arena
- a suitably built, well prepared and defended structure
- situated away from any buildings, bush or tall grass.

The ideal location will:

- be large enough to allow the horse to run through or around a fire
- contain a water supply, such as a dam
- be closely grazed or mown
- be fenced with clear access
- have shade.

Your horse should be familiar with the planned safer place. This includes being familiar with the location of water, feed, gateways and other horses that might share the place.



PHOTO: Julane Bowen

FENCES

Ensure fencing is maintained in good condition.

Fences must be capable of holding a horse without electrified wires, as the power supply often fails during a bush fire. Radiant heat and flames may cause some types of electric fences and fence fittings to melt. This may cause the fence to collapse.

Consider ploughing a six metre wide firebreak outside the paddock along the fence line. A firebreak is a strip of cleared land used to slow down or stop the progress of a fire.

WATER SUPPLIES

The safer place must have a reliable water supply. A reserve supply of drinking water should also be kept, as the water supply may become contaminated by ash from a fire. Some automatic filling water troughs may stop working due to power loss.

Plastic pipe lying on top of the ground may melt and cut off water supplies to paddocks, so bury it where possible.

Protect plastic water tanks that may melt in high heat with a radiant heat shield. This could be a brick or concrete wall, or a steel fence.



MAINTENANCE

- Ensure the area around stables and paddocks are free from a build up of grass, leaf litter, sticks and other vegetation and rubbish.
- Keep grass around buildings and in laneways short and if possible, green.
- Store flammable goods, including hay, fuel and chemicals as far away as possible from your designated safer place for your horse.
- Maintain emergency feed supplies in case fire destroys your normal source of feed.
- Keep the 'safer' area free of manure. Do not store large piles of manure, especially during the warmer months. The pile could build up heat inside and start to burn.



Horse Emergency Survival Kit



PHOTO: Julane Bowen

Prepare an Emergency Survival Kit before the bush fire season starts. Your kit will have items that might help your horse survive a bush fire or other natural disaster.

Keep the kit in an easy to access place and check it regularly to replace out of date materials. It is a good idea to label the kit with the date you packed it and the next date you want to check it.

It is best if the kit is stored in a waterproof container to keep everything in a useable condition.

Include a list of phone numbers for:

- neighbours with horses
- horse transport companies in your area
- club contacts (pony club, dressage)
- local stock supplies
- local vets and farriers.

ITEMS TO INCLUDE IN YOUR KIT

- wire cutters
- sharp knife
- waterproof torch
- container for water
- drinking water
- feed including chaff or hay
- extra lead rope and halter (leather is safer during a fire)
- woollen blankets
- clean towels
- copy of ownership papers
- copy of pedigree / membership / insurance papers
- roll cotton
- self-adhesive bandage (vetrap)
- gauze pads (assorted sizes)
- sterile wound dressing
- tweezers
- adhesive cloth tape
- duct tape
- leg wraps (pillow wraps and stable bandages)
- blindfolds
- scissors
- rectal thermometer
- surgical scrub and antiseptic solution
- wound ointment
- antiseptic spray
- syringes
- non latex gloves
- pliers or nippers (to pull nails)
- eye wash
- temporary fencing and hammer (star pickets and bunting, or electric fence)





ACT on bush fire information

On hot, dry and windy days you should pay extra attention to the fire risk in your area. Be prepared to put your Bush Fire Survival Plan into action and don't rely on a single source of information.

BUSH FIRE INFORMATION

It is important that you are familiar with local bush fire information sources.

- NSW RFS website
www.rfs.nsw.gov.au
- Bush Fire Information Line
1800 NSW RFS
(1800 679 737)
- Fires Near Me
(smartphone application)
- Local media

CHECK FIRE DANGER RATINGS

Fire Danger Ratings give you an indication of the consequences of a fire, if a fire was to start.

Make sure you are familiar with what each level means, because this will guide you on how a bush fire may act, what impacts there might be on the community if a bush fire was to start and when to activate your Bush Fire Survival Plan.

YOU MAY SEE BUSH FIRE ALERTS

Bush Fire Alerts indicate the level of threat from a fire. Alerts will be broadcast on radio or television, but you can also check these on the NSW RFS website or Fires Near Me smartphone application.

Know your triggers to leave and be prepared to activate your Bush Fire Survival Plan with little or no warning.

PLANNING A TRIP?

Place your horse in your prepared paddock if you live in a high risk area and will be away from your property for several days. Let someone know you will be away, don't leave rugs on your horse, and make sure a substantial amount of water is available.

If you're travelling with your horse, check conditions in the area you are travelling to, note down who you will call for help in case of a fire, and carry an Emergency Survival Kit.



Follow your plan and SURVIVE



Go to
www.dpi.nsw.gov.au
for advice on how the
Department of Primary Industries can
help you with your animals before,
during and after fire events.

During a fire emergency, the NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) has responsibilities around preparedness, prevention, response and recovery and may be able to provide you with advice and assistance for your animals before, during and after a fire.

You can find more information at the NSW DPI website www.dpi.nsw.gov.au.

The NSW DPI coordinates emergency assistance for horses and other livestock immediately after a bush fire, including veterinary assistance and emergency food and water. They may also help euthanase severely injured horses on veterinary advice.

IF YOUR PLAN IS TO LEAVE EARLY

You should plan to leave early in the morning or even the night before. Leaving early will reduce stress on you and your animals and give you and your horse a better chance of surviving.

Relocating to a safer place at the last minute is very risky and not a safe option.

There will be limited vision, emergency vehicles and other road users to contend with. Smoke and noise will be a huge stress for your horse and even the best float trained horses can become difficult to load. Food may help to keep your horse focused.



IF YOUR PLAN IS TO STAY AND DEFEND YOUR PROPERTY

Your first priority is to make sure you and your family are safe, then consider your horse.



- Remove all gear from your horse: plastic melts, metal heats up and rugs catch on fire. This includes rugs, fly veils and masks, 'skinny hoods' and halters. If you must leave gear on your horse, such as a halter, use gear made of fire-resistant materials, such as leather.
- You can put your phone number on the side of the horse in spray paint or eventing crayon.
- Ensure your horse has access to clean drinking water, as this will help with dehydration and burns. Dams will have to be checked for ash and debris, which can contaminate the water. Use the stored water in your horse's emergency kit, or any other stored water.
- If your horse's safer place consists of more than one paddock, secure the gates open so they don't close during the fire.
- Once the fire arrives, keep yourself and your family safe and go inside the house to protect yourself from radiant heat. Your horse should be okay if it is able to move around in your prepared safer place.



PHOTO: Ruth Allsopp

Immediate care after a fire



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Ensure the people on your property are safe first and check for spot fires around the house and roof cavities. Vets may be unable to get to you for some time due to road closures and work load, so initial care might be your responsibility.

Remove the horse from hot ground as soon as possible to avoid laminitis.

Using clean fresh water, make sure the horse drinks to avoid dehydration and do the skin pinch test on the neck for at least 24 hours after the fire.

If the horse is well hydrated, the skin will return to normal after 1-2 seconds.

Any burns should either be hosed, or sponged if on the face for as long as the horse will allow.

Check the nostrils for discharge. Any black discharge along with signs of distress, such as laboured breathing or wheezing, could mean respiratory burns or smoke inhalation. In this case, your horse should be referred to a vet as soon as possible.

BUSH FIRE INFORMATION LINE

1800 NSW RFS

1 8 0 0 6 7 9 7 3 7

www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

