



Bushfire preparation: ask yourselves these questions...

Looking after the farm

- Do you have adequate, current insurance for the value of your stock and infrastructure (fences, fodder, cost of clearing/rebuilding if burnt out)?
- Is your farm inventory up to date? Take photos of your stored feed and machinery, building interiors and exteriors.
- Do you have adequate low risk areas where potential bushfire fuel is minimal? Low risk areas include bared out paddocks, ploughed paddocks, irrigated paddocks and green summer crops, yards and paddocks protected by laneways or ploughed firebreaks
- Are low risk paddocks large enough to allow stock to move far enough away from the fire?
- Have you thought where it might be useful areas to have mown or ploughed firebreaks (3–6m wide)? e.g. along roads, beneath power lines, around haystacks and buildings, along fence lines.
- Are the areas around buildings, yards and fuel supplies grazed/slashed to reduce fuel levels? Are boundary fences stock proof even without electricity?
- Is your property name and number clearly visible from both directions at the property entrance? Is there room for a fire truck to turn around (at the house as well as at the dairy)?
- Are gutters cleared and potential ember entry points blocked?
- Are your tractors and other farm machinery equipped with fire extinguishers and a shovel? Do all staff know the risk in harvesting, grinding, welding or slashing on hot, dry, windy days?
- Is hay and silage stored in multiple locations to avoid large losses?

Looking after the herd

- Do you have a generator for your dairy (and for your house)? Is it enough to both milk the herd and keep the milk cool in the event of a black out? Does everyone know how to use the generator? Have you practised? For more information go to “**Preparing for power outages**” handout at www.dairyaustralia.com.au/farm/land-water-carbon/extreme-weather [Accessed 1/1/20]
- How will you feed calves if the power goes out and you can't milk? Waste milk from neighbouring farms will risk introducing diseases to your farm. Powdered milk and vat milk are the safest options.
- When and where will you move your milking herd and young stock on days of Extreme/Catastrophic /Code Red fire danger or if a fire is imminent in your area? Who will be responsible?
- Will you be able to provide water for your stock in the event of a fire/black out? Do low risk areas have enough drinking water? Stock may need to stay there for many hours or days in high to extreme temperatures and will be susceptible to dehydration.
- Are all your animals identified (NLIS, ear tags) in case of fences being destroyed and stock escaping? Photographic records of valuable stock are useful to keep.
- If your livestock are on agistment, have you developed a livestock bushfire plan with the landholder?

Looking after yourselves

- Are important documents and farm records (along with other valuables) easy to grab if you need to move them quickly? Do you have copies/back-ups of all this information off-site? (For example, a fireproof gun safe, or herd data stored in the cloud).
- Who is responsible for monitoring the State's Emergency app or website, or listening to the local ABC radio to keep aware of bushfires/conditions?
- Do you have battery driven radio in case you lose TV/mobile reception? Do you have chargers for phones/batteries?
- Do you have fire-fighting equipment? Does everyone on staff know how to use it? Have you practised? Effluent spreaders can also be used to put out fires.
- Have you planned where you and your staff will shelter if a fire is imminent in your area?
- Do you have appropriate clothing ready in the event of a fire? E.g. heavy-duty drill cotton overalls, pure wool pullover, brimmed hat, leather boots/strong shoes, eye protection. Are they readily accessible and are there spares for visitors?
- Do you have adequate equipment in your ute in the event of a fire? E.g. Water bottles to stay hydrated, phone charger, woollen blanket for sheltering under, chainsaw for cutting fallen branches, fence cutters to rescue trapped stock or to drive into cleared stock-free paddocks if you get trapped by fallen trees on road. Is the ute full of fuel?
- Is the back of the ute cleared of hay debris and other flammable materials?
- Do you have a plan for your own home and family and other homes and families on your property?

If caught in the car/ute: pull over into a cleared area or behind a solid structure. Position car/ute towards the approaching fire. Headlights and hazard lights on, engine off, windows and vents closed. Get down below window level, covered with woollen blanket. Drink water.

If caught in the open, last resort options include large open areas (like a ploughed paddock) or a large dam or river (NOT a water tank). Protect yourself from radiant heat (e.g. a woollen blanket, mud).

The information in this info sheet was collated from the following resources:

- agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/emergencies/horses-and-livestock-in-emergencies [Accessed 1/1/20]
- agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/emergencies/recovery/livestock-after-an-emergency/assessing-cattle-after-a-bushfire [Accessed 1/1/20]
- www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/96811/Assessing-bushfire-burns-in-livestock.pdf [Accessed 1/1/20]
- www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/96821/bushfire-preparedness.pdf [Last accessed 1/1/15]