



# Keeping Your Animals Safe in an Emergency

Are you ready? Make a plan for ALL your family

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# Are you an animal owner?



Floods, fires and other emergencies can happen at any time and with little warning.

Your animals **WILL** affect how quickly and easily you can evacuate if there is an emergency.

**This brochure will help you to:**

- determine the risk to you and your animals
- develop a PLAN, which includes your animals
- identify where to take your animals and how you will get there safely
- understand emergency warnings and act early
- make ALL your animals identifiable for their safety
- prepare a 'Grab and Go' kit
- plan for the unexpected — in case you are not at home
- make preparations for the animals you can't take with you
- build an 'Animal Ready Community'

# Am I at risk?

To make a good plan, you need to know the risks in your local area.

Do you live in or near bushland, a nature reserve, National Park or close to grasslands? Do you have a flood risk? How accessible is your property and local area, e.g. if local roads were closed, or if public transport was stopped?

There is additional information that can help you plan if you live in a flood or bushfire risk area. If you're in a flood risk area — do you know what height your property is? If you're in a bushfire area — do you know your property's Bushfire Attack Level (BAL?)

## What about the risks of other extreme events?

Your region may be affected by severe storms, occasional heavy snow falls and, increasingly, heatwaves. These events can result in injury or loss of life, and damage to property.

## What do you need to prepare for?

In bushfires and severe weather events it is common to have disruptions to water, power and phone services — for hours, or even days. Road networks and public transport can be impacted, making it hard to get home or to leave. People and animals may need to relocate or evacuate to safety.

### How do I find out what my risks are?

- For bush fire on the NSW Rural Fire Service website: [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/know-your-risk](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/know-your-risk)
- For flood on the NSW State Emergency Service website: [www.ses.nsw.gov.au/your-local-risk](http://www.ses.nsw.gov.au/your-local-risk)
- Visit your local council's website for information



# Animals in an Emergency

Be aware that your animals may behave differently in an emergency.

Animals, like humans, can feel stressed and anxious in an emergency. They may also pick up on your stress.

Animals will be affected by environmental changes that occur in an emergency — like floodwater, smoke, heat, flames, loud noises and sirens.

When animals are frightened they can become aggressive, can bite, scratch or kick (even if this is not part of their normal behaviour).

If animals are anxious, they could hide, run away or be difficult to move.



## Prepare your animals early.

- With smaller animals you can put them in their crate, or in a room, where they are safe and contained.
- With larger animals, you can load them on a float or trailer, or move them close at hand in preparation for when you leave.
- If your animals are secure and safe, this will leave you free to take care of other members of your family.

**If you act early your WHOLE family will be ready to leave when you need to move to safety.**



# How you can prepare as an animal owner

Over 90% of owners consider their animals to be family. Your animals WILL affect how quickly and easily you can evacuate if there is an emergency.

Most people have close bonds with their animals and will want to save them in an emergency — even if that means putting their own safety at risk. So it is important to be prepared, and to have plans for what you will do in an emergency, like a flood, bush fire or severe storm.

**To keep your animals safe in an emergency, make them a part of your plan.**

Remember, you are responsible for your animals. Don't expect someone to come and rescue them for you. Have a plan for ALL your animals. You need to plan for the animals you can take with you and any animals you may need to leave behind.

## Your best approach is to:

- understand your level of risk
- have a plan and be as self-reliant as you can
- discuss your plan with family, friends and neighbours
- be alert to worsening weather conditions and official warnings
- identify options to keep your animals safe
- act early



# Develop a plan ... and include all your animals

This is a plan for what you would do for your family, including your animals, in the event of severe storms and floods, bush fires, heat waves and other extreme weather events.

Remember: In an emergency **you** are responsible for the welfare of your animals. You are also responsible for managing your animals so they do not present a danger to other people or animals.

## What should my plan include for my animals?

- Where to go and how to get there — planning to stay with family or friends is often the most comfortable and convenient option.
- What to take for your animals — prepare a ‘Grab and Go’ kit.
- How to identify, secure and transport your animals.
- If you have large animals like horses and livestock, a plan to relocate them early to a safer area.

Remember to practice your plan at least once a year.



# Plan on a Page

## What I will do with my animals during an emergency

Animals need to go with you if you have to evacuate your home. It is safer for them and for you.

Please take a few minutes to complete this plan.

### STEP 1 What I will take for my animal(s) if we have to leave

Decide the essential things your animal(s) needs for 3-7 days. You may not be able to get home for a while. You can pack them into a *Grab and Go Bag*, so you are ready to leave quickly. Remember to take it with you wherever you go.

My Grab and Go Bag is located here:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food and Treats    | <input type="checkbox"/> Identification Tags                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bowls/Buckets/Tubs | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo with owner                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Any medicines      | <input type="checkbox"/> Toileting requirements              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toys               | <input type="checkbox"/> Registration and vaccination papers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bedding            |  |

Microchipping your animal and registering them with the NSW Pet Registry at [www.petregistry.nsw.gov.au](http://www.petregistry.nsw.gov.au) will help reunite them with you if separated during an emergency.

### STEP 2 How I will contain and transport my animal(s)

Check you have enough crates, carriers, cages and leads. Also work out with your transport how many trips you will need to take.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crate/Carrier        | <input type="checkbox"/> Car/Float        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cage/Other container | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends Car      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lead/Harness         | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Transport |

Remember to secure/contain your animals asap, so they are safe while you get ready and close at hand so you can leave quickly.

### STEP 3 When and where I will go to be safe with my animal(s)

Leaving early and going to stay with family/friends is often most comfortable and convenient.

Evacuation centres may be opened and you can always take your animals along with you.

Stay informed by listening to ABC and local radio and going to the emergency service links provided below.

- I will be going to family/friends house with my animal(s). Their details are:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

- If I am not home, our family/friend/ neighbour knows what to do. Their details are:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

- I will relocate my animal/livestock early to:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

### STEP 4 This plan is on my fridge, in my phone and given to my family/friend/ neighbour

Names: \_\_\_\_\_

Thanks for making a plan. Stay safe, and remember to leave early if you need to evacuate

[www.getreadyanimals.nsw.gov.au](http://www.getreadyanimals.nsw.gov.au)



**GET READY**  
Animals



# Where are you taking your animals?

Decide well in advance the safest locations for your animals.

- Discuss with your friends and family if you can stay with them in an emergency and if you can bring your animals.
- Talk with your pony or equestrian club or reach out to animal groups on how you can support one another in an emergency. Create a network to communicate and act if you need to relocate your larger animals (e.g. horses, alpacas).
- Work with neighbours and friends to plan together.

Think about ...

- How you will transport your animals? Will you need to make more than one journey? How long will it take?
- Do you have a cage for each cat? Do you have a collar and leash or crate for each dog? Does your dog need a muzzle?
- Have you practised loading your horses onto a float?
- Do you own a float? Is it registered and well maintained? If not, can you borrow a float?



# How will you get to safety?

Think about the routes you could take to relocate your family and animals.

Develop your plan to allow for one-way-in, one-way-out' roads, or potential traffic changes such as roads and junctions becoming heavily congested, blocked or even closed.

**Leaving early is the safest option.**

Traffic conditions may result in trips taking longer than expected. Consider packing extra supplies eg water, and consider what to do if animals become stressed, need toilet stops, or are affected by smoke or extreme weather conditions.

**Bush fires can move extremely fast. During a bush fire always follow the advice of the authorities.**

Listen to media announcements (television, radio and online) as well as local radio and ABC local radio.



# Listen to warnings ...

- Pay attention to your local weather forecasts, bush fire alert levels or local flood watch (indication of a developing weather pattern that might cause floods in one or two days).
- Monitor media, especially ABC Radio and local community radio for emergency information.
- Social media and mobile apps may also provide valuable information, e.g. NSW SES Facebook page, NSW RFS 'Fires Near Me' app, [www.abc.net.au/emergency](http://www.abc.net.au/emergency).

## .... and act early

- Stay calm, think clearly and put your plan into action
- Give yourself plenty of time to deal with any unforeseen problems
- Put your plan into place early — if you need to make more than one trip and/or to move large animals to a safe location
- Check with your local council and Live Traffic for road closure information [www.livetraffic.com](http://www.livetraffic.com)

Be prepared and relocate your animals to safety early — this can reduce stress for them and for you.



# Prepare a ‘Grab and Go’ kit

Prepare an evacuation kit for all your animals. You should be able to maintain your animals for 3 to 7 days.

Consider restraint and transport, food, water, toileting, medications, first aid, housing and bedding:

- cages or pet carriers for each animal; or
- muzzle and leash; or lead rope and head collar for each animal
- 3-7 days of food and water for each animal
- bowl or feed bucket
- can opener and spoon
- woollen blanket, towels or bedding
- animal medications and first aid items
- take a photo of your pet’s vaccination certificate
- litter and litter tray for cats
- poo bags for dogs
- toys
- and whatever else you feel is essential for the first 3 to 7 days.



Store your ‘Grab and Go’ kit where it’s easy to locate. If you can’t store everything — have a checklist of what you need to grab before you go!

# EMERGENCY Grab & Go Bag FOR PETS

Being prepared so that you and your pets are ready for any emergency will ensure you can act quickly if you need to. An **Emergency Grab and Go Bag** should contain all the essential items your pets need to be cared for and comfortable.

**Crates, carriers, cages, or enclosures to contain and easily transport your pet:**



**Bowls, plus food and water for 3-7 days**



**Familiar items, i.e. favourite toys**



**Toileting requirements, including litter trays, bags, etc.**



**Bedding, heating pad for reptiles**



**Collar with ID tag, harness, or leash (include backups)**



**Important documents: registration & vaccination**



**Medicines, medical records and first aid kit**



**Current picture of you and your pet together**



Take 5 minutes to make your plan  
Go to [www.getreadyanimals.nsw.gov.au](http://www.getreadyanimals.nsw.gov.au)



**GET READY**  
Animals



# Animal identification



**Permanently identify your animals. This will help reunite you and your animals if separated during an emergency.**

- Microchips are best for most animals.
- Ensure your personal details are up-to-date on the NSW Pet Registry.
- Take clear photos of your animals showing any distinct markings.
- Place a collar on your smaller animals with your name and phone number.
- Place ID tags or labels on any pet carriers.
- Horses can have emergency contact information attached to their mane through a tag e.g. Manestay.

**Ensure your small acreage has a Property Identification Code (PIC)**

A PIC number helps NSW Department of Primary Industries, Local Land Services and emergency services to know what animals you have in case of emergency.

**Contact your Local Land Services office for advice.**



# What if you're not at home?

**When developing a good plan, be aware that you might not be at home.**

When an emergency strikes you could be at work, on holidays or restricted from getting home (e.g. road closures).



## So make sure:

- everyone who lives, works or agists at your property knows your plan
- your neighbours, friends and family know your plan
- spare keys to padlocked gates are available for others to use if necessary
- you have a list of people you can call who are willing and able to help relocate or evacuate your animals if you are not at home.



**Remember that in an emergency phone lines can be down and people might be hard to reach. Talking about your plan with family, friends and neighbours BEFORE an emergency gives you the best chance to keep your animals safe.**

# What if you can't take all your animals with you?



Sometimes you may not be able to take your animals with you. Be prepared to give them the best chance to stay safe.

- Ensure all animals have access to food and fresh water for at least 3-7 days as you may not be able to return to your home/property.
- Allow outdoor animals to roam freely. Do not tether them.
- For stock, horses or non-indoor pets, prepare a safe paddock or refuge and use a heat resistant trough for feed and water.
- If a safer refuge is unavailable, fix internal gates in an open position or cut internal fencing. This can give large animals opportunity to escape danger.
- NEVER open the external gates to your property. Animals loose on external roads are at great danger to themselves, other drivers and emergency services.
- Leave indoor pets inside in separate rooms with small or no windows.
- Ensure all animals can be identified, such as with brands, microchips, NLIS, tags or have photos of distinctive markings in case they become lost. A mobile number written on both sides of large animals can assist.
- Remove rugs, halters, and if possible metal shoes, as they may be flammable, melt, cause burns or snag.



## Create a refuge

- Minimise trees and/or use low flammability trees.
- Identify and then clear away any obstacles that could burn or entangle your animals.
- Provide multiple solid water troughs.



## Fire

- Heavily graze or plough a paddock to remove fuel for fire, use a green summer crop and/or use firebreaks at least 6m wide.
- Use low flammability hedges, walls/buildings or earth banks to provide protection from radiant heat.

## Flood

- Locate or build an area of higher ground above the area of your property that will be affected by floodwaters.

# Having the conversation...



**Preparedness for an emergency is strengthened through discussing issues, and making connections, with people in your community.**

- consider the people you already know who you could talk with eg. family members; friends or neighbours; people in a group, club or church you belong to; staff at a local neighbourhood/community centre you attend etc.
- buddy-up with friends or neighbours and make plans to help each other if you are not home — or can't get back in an emergency.
- visit your local RFS station and speak with officers there.
- speak to the staff at your local vet clinic
- research your options — where could you relocate your animals that is outside your local area?
- keep up to date with community initiatives — like 'Get Ready' events.
- join online communities — for example, animal-related groups on Facebook where you can share ideas and plan to support each other in an emergency.

This document has been created to provide general information to animal owners to become an 'Animal Ready Community'.

**An 'Animal Ready Community' aims to understand the risks and challenges facing animals and those people who care for them during emergencies, and works together to prepare for future events.**

The production of this document was made through the assistance and support of the NSW SES Hawkesbury Unit, Greater Sydney Local Land Services, NSW Department of Primary Industries, Agnes Banks Equine Clinic, Hawkesbury City Council, NSW Rural Fire Service, Dr Mel Taylor, Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre and Infrastructure NSW.

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## Where to find more information

[www.getreadyanimals.nsw.gov.au](http://www.getreadyanimals.nsw.gov.au)

**Department of Primary Industries** — [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au)

- Before an emergency
- Pet safety in emergencies
- Horse safety in emergencies
- Livestock safety in emergencies

**Local Land Services** — [www.greatersydney.lls.nsw.gov.au](http://www.greatersydney.lls.nsw.gov.au)

- Property Identification Codes

**NSW Pet Registry** — [www.petregistry.nsw.gov.au](http://www.petregistry.nsw.gov.au)

- Update your personal details

**RSPCA** — [www.rspcansw.org.au](http://www.rspcansw.org.au)

- Owning a pet — Disaster Management Plans

**NSW State Emergency Service** — [www.ses.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ses.nsw.gov.au)

- Home Emergency Plan
- Animal Emergency Plan
- FloodSafe for your pets and animals
- StormSafe: Pet Fact Sheet

**NSW Rural Fire Service** — [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au)

- Your guide to making a bush fire plan
- Fires Near Me
- Prepare Your Horse for a Bush Fire

**WIRES (NSW Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service Inc.)** — [www.wires.org.au](http://www.wires.org.au)

- Injured wildlife