

# Pets and bushfires

A GUIDE FOR PET OWNERS



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

## Do you have a plan?

If you live near bush, grassland or coastal areas, you need to plan for your and your pets' safety on all bushfire risk days.

## Include your pets in your plan

If your plan is to leave early, think about what you'll do with your pets. On **Catastrophic** days the safest place to be is away from bushfire risk areas.

If you choose to take your pets with you, it's important to confine them early and remember:

- Pets are safest on a lead or in carriers.
- Make sure they have plenty of water to drink.
- Have an emergency kit for your pets.
- Practise moving your pets when you leave.
- Make a list of where you could house your pets. This could include boarding kennels, a relative/friend's place or you may keep them with you.

If you travel to a high-risk bushfire area for a holiday, make sure you have a plan to keep you and your pets safe on hot, dry, windy days.

It is important that your pets are microchipped and wearing a collar identification tag at all times. Ensure all contact information is current and include an emergency contact linked to your pets' records.

Central Animal Records provides pet identification and recovery services for cats and dogs. Visit [car.com.au](http://car.com.au).

Don't get caught out. Make sure your pets are well away from bushfire risk areas on all **Catastrophic** days.

## Prepare an emergency kit for your pets

Your emergency kit for pets should include:

- food and water
- a bowl for each pet
- a second collar and lead
- a carrier for cats and smaller pets
- bedding and a pure wool blanket
- a pet first-aid kit – seek your vet's advice
- a favourite toy
- any medications your pet is taking and a written list of them
- your pet's medical history including proof of vaccination
- your vet's contact details.

## Pet care during hot weather

Heat stress in dogs and cats occurs when they are unable to maintain their normal body temperature on a hot day.

On all hot days, especially days of **Extreme** or **Catastrophic** fire danger, it is important that you keep your pets as cool as possible.

Keeping your pets comfortable on a hot day is your responsibility. Look for the warning signs:

- excessive panting
- salivating
- pets that whine or seem agitated.

In cases of severe heat stress or heat stroke, pets may stop panting and vomit.

If your pet exhibits any of these symptoms, a vet should be consulted immediately.



## Pet injuries after a fire

If your pets suffer burn injuries during a fire, they must receive immediate treatment. As soon as it is safe to do so, take your pets to the nearest vet clinic or animal shelter. In the interim, treat affected areas with cool water.

## Personal safety during bushfire

Always put your own safety before the safety of your pets. Deaths occur during bushfires when people are caught out in the open, attempting to leave late. Ensure you wear protective clothing and drink water.

If you cannot leave the area, consider shelter options close by that may protect you. These may include:

- a well-prepared home (yours or a neighbour's) that you can actively defend
- a private bunker (that meets current regulations)
- a designated Community Fire Refuge.

Last resort options could include:

- a Bushfire Place of Last Resort (Neighbourhood Safer Place)
- a stationary car in a cleared area
- a ploughed paddock or reserve
- a body of water (such as the beach, pool, dam or river). This does not include a water tank. Dams may not be reliable as they may be empty in summer.

Note that last resort options carry a high risk of trauma, injury or death.

## Ten tips for keeping your pets cool on hot days

- Have fresh, cool water available at all times.
- Ensure your pets have shade at all times or bring them inside into a cool room.
- Wipe your pets down with a cool, damp towel or leave wet towels out for them to lie on.
- Wet your dog with cool water several times throughout the day.
- Consider buying a wading pool for your dog.
- For cats, rub damp hands over their coat or along their tummy.
- Place ice blocks in your pet's water bowl.
- Wrap ice in a cloth and place it near your pets.
- Consider having your dog clipped if their coat is long and thick.
- Never leave your pets in a vehicle on a hot day.

## Further information

- Pet Welfare - RSPCA [rspca.org.au](https://www.rspca.org.au)
- Bushfire safety and property preparation – CFA website [cfa.vic.gov.au](https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)

## Where to find warnings and advice

- Check the [VicEmergency App](#) for up-to-date Fire Danger Rating and Total Fire Ban information, as well as warnings and the locations of current fires. Download the App for free for Apple and Android.
- Local news: listen to ABC Local Radio, commercial and designated community radio stations and watch Sky News TV.
- VicEmergency Hotline: **1800 226 226**.
- National Relay Service: callers who are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech/communication impairment can contact the VicEmergency Hotline via the National Relay Service **1800 555 677**.
- VicEmergency: [emergency.vic.gov.au](https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au)
- Social Media: [facebook.com/cfavic](https://www.facebook.com/cfavic) twitter [@CFA\\_Updates](https://twitter.com/CFA_Updates)
- Interpreter **131 450**: If you do not speak English, call the Translating and Interpreting Service.