

HORSES AND BUSHFIRES

A quick reference guide for horse owners

CFA encourages all people who live near bush, grassland or coastal areas to develop a Bushfire Survival Plan. For many people this will include planning for the safety and survival of their horses.

Whether the horses are at home or on agistment you will need to plan and prepare for their safety.

Prepare a safe place for your horse

On forecast days of Severe, Extreme or Code Red (catastrophic) fire danger make sure your horses can move freely and have access to a large area where there is minimal vegetation. A large, well-grazed paddock or a series of small paddocks with the internal gates left open would be suitable.

Horses are quite good at avoiding bushfire if they are given enough room and will quickly move to burnt ground to survive. Ideally the paddock they inhabit should have a dam in it where the horses can seek relief from the heat.



A sand ménage can also be suitable if there are no buildings or vegetation close by that could catch fire.

Do not lock your horses in a stable, holding yard or similar small environment.

Do not let your horses out on the roads: they will be in more danger from traffic and the fire.

What to do if you or your horse will not be safe on your property

There are a number of options you may wish to consider:

- Agisting your horses out of the area during the summer (Fire Danger Period)
- Making arrangements to temporarily relocate your horses on days forecast to be Severe, Extreme or Code Red (catastrophic).

If you plan to move your horses to another location remember that you will need to move them well in advance of fire threatening your property. It is unlikely you will be able to safely move your horses once a fire has started.

PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.

Once a fire starts it can travel quickly making it dangerous for you and your horses to be on the road. Visibility will be poor due to smoke and roads will be dangerous due to spot fires, falling trees, and emergency vehicles on the roads. Roads may be closed making it impossible to reach your horses or to remove the horses from the property.

Other considerations

On forecast days of Severe, Extreme or Code Red (catastrophic) fire danger it is recommended that you remove all gear from your horses as it could melt or become very hot and cause serious burns.

Permanently identify your horses. Identification could include microchipping or branding.

Register your horses on the Horse Emergency Contact Database (HECD). Visit the Australian Horse Industries Council at www.horsecouncil.org.au for further information.

After the fire

Horses tend to recover well after a fire. They often suffer facial burns and their eyelids may be very swollen to the extent where they cannot open them. Appropriate treatment will soon restore them to full health.

A horse suffering from burns requires prompt veterinary attention but there are some ways to make them more comfortable until the vet arrives. Sponge affected areas with cold water. If legs are affected try standing your horse in a bucket of water to reduce pain and swelling. Any first aid administered should be anti-inflammatory.

Personal safety during bushfire

It is always important to put your own safety before the safety of your horses. Most deaths during bushfires occur when people are caught out in the open and are exposed to radiant heat from the fire. Radiant heat can kill.

Radiant heat cannot penetrate through solid objects so it is critical that you shield yourself from radiant heat by:

- Seeking shelter inside a building – preferably a well-prepared house.
- Wearing appropriate personal protective clothing made of natural fibres like long-sleeved overalls or a long-sleeved shirt and trousers made of cotton. On no account should synthetic materials be worn.

Further information about horses and bushfires

Visit the Australian Horse Industry Council at www.horsecouncil.org.au. For the Department of Primary Industries at www.dpi.vic.gov.au. For information on bushfire safety and property preparation visit the CFA website www.cfa.vic.gov.au.

For more information please visit the CFA website at www.cfa.vic.gov.au or phone the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667.



PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.

FireReady The logo for FireReady, featuring the word 'FireReady' in a bold, red font, followed by the Victorian state logo.