

PREPARING FOR A BUSHFIRE

In the event of a bushfire, it is very important as a horse owner to have pre-planned actions and proper information to make rapid decisions that may save your horse's and also your own life. It is your choice to evacuate or stay, but remember YOU are responsible for developing your own plan and putting it in place. Once you have a plan, let friends, family and especially neighbours know, this allows a sharing of information and resources. Below are some ideas to get you thinking, planning and acting. For more information on preparing your property, house and yourself, please see NSW rural fire service website <http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/>

ASSESS YOUR RISKS

- ✓ What are your major vulnerabilities? *Secluded properties, dirt roads, bush and scrub, limited water supply*
- ✓ What can you do to minimise the damage? *Clear dry/dead scrub, empty full gutters, invest in water pumps or generators*
- ✓ What plans do you have in place for evacuation, transport and alternative accommodation for your horse(s)?
- ✓ Who do you need to contact and are the details at hand?

BEFORE THE EVENT

- Take a careful look at your property and identify the safest place for your animals. For horses this needs to be a large area, access to water with minimal scrub and grass and the ability to run/flee.
- Prepare for the possibility you might want/need to evacuate (check with your local veterinarian, police, animal control, or rural fire service for routes and recommendations).
- Find several alternative stabling zones and check the entry requirements for each. Be sure to have agreements arranged for your animals in advance. EPIC normally offers accommodation when Bushfires are around.
- Prepare an ID packet for each horse, including photos of front, back, near side and off side; age, sex, breed, colour, registrations, unique ID's, photos, microchip numbers, etc.
- Write down any special feeding instructions; list any medications with dosage; record the name and phone number of your prescribing veterinarian.
- Be sure all vaccinations and medical records are in writing and up-to-date.

- Take records with you. Records left at home may be damaged or destroyed during a disaster.
- Check for alternate and large water sources. Have a fresh water reservoir of at least 40-80L per horse per day with hay available for 48-72 hours.
- Keep trucks and trailers well maintained and full of fuel.
- Keep insurance coverage current and adequate.
- Consider an event where you might be unable to save/evacuate all your animals. Make a priority list. Familiarise family and farm personnel with the list in case you are not there when the disaster occurs.
- If your horses are on shared, agistment properties, make sure you know what the evacuation and fire plan is for that property. Make sure that there is one, that you agree with it or discuss your concerns with the owner.

It's a good idea to have an emergency kit packed, which should include:

- ✓ Metal trash barrel with lid
- ✓ Tarpaulins
- ✓ Metal water buckets
- ✓ First aid items
 - Betadine/Iodine or Chlorhex/Hibitane solutions
 - Anti-inflammatories (Bute etc)
 - Gauze squares and bandages (Combine, Elastoplast, etc)
 - Foot bandages (disposable nappies, animalintex)
 - Eye ointment
- ✓ Portable radio, torch and extra batteries
- ✓ Fire resistant, non-nylon leads and halters with name tags (eg pet tags), leather is a better option as it will not melt.
- ✓ Knife, scissors, wire cutters
- ✓ Duct tape
- ✓ Livestock markers or paint
- ✓ Leg wraps (non-nylon)
- ✓ Lime and bleach/disinfectant

DEVELOP A BUDDY SYSTEM

Talk with a neighbour or friend and make arrangements to check on each other after a disaster. Tell one another if you are evacuating and to where, so authorities will know. Buddies may agree to pool resources, such as generators, water tanks, horse floats, etc. Permanently identify each horse by tattoo, microchip, brand, tag, photographs (front, rear, left and right side) and/or drawing. If disaster strikes before you can do this, paint or etch hooves, use neck or pastern bands, or paint your telephone number on the side of the animal.

BUSHFIRE PLAN

Here are some pointers as to how to manage your horse in a bushfire. Remember evacuate early if you plan to do so. Keep in mind horses are flight animals and need the ability to run and jump in a catastrophic event.

- **The safest area on the property for horses is the largest! Open all internal gates to allow horses to move between paddocks.**
- **Keep external gates closed and DO NOT let horses out onto roads as they might cause accidents which you will be held responsible for.**
- **If possible give access to paddocks, arenas, round yards without scrub, long grass, and ideally sand and dirt areas.**
- **Don't leave synthetic halters, leads, flymasks or rugs on your horses as these will melt and cause serious burns to your horse and yourself. Take all of these off if a fire threatens**
- **Use fire resistant materials such as leather halters and metal buckets.**
- **Fill all troughs, sinks and metal buckets with water. As much water as possible in case you cannot return that day.**
- **Wet horse down**
- **DO NOT lock in barns, stable and small yard, you are taking away their ability to flee**
- **Give plenty of room to move. They will run, jump over fires and stand in blackened areas. Trust in your horse, they will do everything in their power to not get hurt.**

REMEMBER YOUR OWN PROTECTION

We know it is hot, but the best and smartest option is to cover yourself.

- Use cotton fabrics
- Long sleeves, trousers and hats
- Leather gloves and boots
- Protect your eyes and mouth with wet bandanas etc

PRACTICE YOUR PLAN

When disaster strikes, remain calm and follow your plan! Remember it is vital to be able to leave early in any mandatory evacuation to avoid getting stalled in traffic and create unnecessary hardships.

AFTER AN EVENT

- Notify family, friends and officials that you are OK and whether you stayed or evacuated. Use phones, radios, Internet, signs or word of mouth.
- Inspect your premises carefully before turning out horses. Look for foreign materials (tin, glass, nails) and downed fences or power lines.
- Be careful leaving your animals unattended outside. Familiar scents and landmarks may be altered, and your horses could easily become confused and lost.
- Check with your veterinarian or State Veterinarian's office for information of any disease threats that may exist because of the situation.
- If you find other horses, use extreme caution in handling, and work in pairs if possible. Keep the horse contained, isolated, and notify authorities as soon as possible.
- If any horses are lost, contact local authorities.
- Paterson's curse takes the opportunity after a bushfire to flourish. Please monitor and keep horses off infected paddocks.

FIRST AID

Burns are not something to take lightly as you are only aware of the external damage. Internally your horse may have smoke inhalation and burnt/damaged airways which can take up to 7 days to show itself. PLEASE ALWAYS CALL A VET TO DISCUSS.

- Check your horses all over
- Note any swellings, bald patches, lumps, increased breathing rate and odd breathing sounds
- Check the horse has good flow of air out each nostril
- Offer cool water
- Cold hose your horse all over and keep the hose on swollen areas for more than 20 minutes.
- Please be aware of putting ointments on burnt areas of your horse. Some ointments such as, Prednoderin, can slow the healing process. Check with your local vet first and keep it simple by using Manuka honey and cold water to help reduce inflammation, pain and infection..

**BE PREPARED TO IDENTIFY AND DOCUMENT
OWNERSHIP WHEN CLAIMING YOUR LOST HORSE(S).**