

CFS GUIDE

Looking after horses in bushfires

If you own a horse, it is important you plan what you will do to protect them if your property is threatened by bushfire.



Safer Paddocks for horses

You may be able to make a safer paddock for your horses, which is a large, open area where there is limited vegetation or fuel for a fire to burn.

Preferably the paddock will have a large water supply, such as a dam, and is an area big enough for your horse to move freely to escape flames as they pass.

The paddock may be heavily grazed or a series of interlocking paddocks that internal gates can be opened to interlink.

Fencing and gates for the paddock should not allow your horse to exit the property as they could become a hazard for emergency services personnel and other vehicles.

Include your horses in your Bushfire Survival Plan

Write a Bushfire Survival Plan that includes what you will do to protect your horses and to practise it.

First, decide what you will do with your horses in the event of a fire.

Ensure your Bushfire Survival Plan is written and placed somewhere that is clearly visible and is practised often.

Your Bushfire Survival Plan needs to consider the level of risk according to the Total Fire Ban rating, and your level of response.

Your plan should have phone numbers for all of the people associated with the welfare of your animals.

It should also include your Property Identification Code (PIC number), which is issued by PIRSA, to help with animal identification and post-bushfire support.

Ensure your horses are registered against your PIC number with PIRSA.

Share your plan with your neighbours.

If you plan to relocate your horses within the property – plan how, when and where you will relocate to.

Before moving your horses, ensure you have identified a horse safer paddock to go to and have a plan on how to get there.

If you plan to transport your horses to another location, do so well before the smoke and fire arrives.

This will help you avoid stress for yourself and your horse by being caught in traffic or trapped in a fire.

If you are agisting your horses, ensure the owners of the property have a Bushfire Survival Plan and discuss your needs.

Looking after horses in bushfires

Plan to move your horses into safer paddocks well before a fire starts.

Preparing your property

Consider the following options:

- Install fire proof fencing in your horse safer paddock - i.e. steel or concrete posts, particularly if you own a stallion.
- Make sure the external fences are secure and electric fences have a battery back-up, as power can be lost during bushfires.
- Consider installing a gate between your boundary and your neighbour's property. You may organise to open this on Total Fire Ban days and give all stock more room to move.

Emergency Kits for your horses

Consider creating an Emergency Kit for your horses which may include items like:

- Electric fence tape, rods and battery unit for a temporary yard.
- Feed such as pellets in a metal bin.
- Head collars/halters, lead ropes, light blankets, fly veils.
- Basic first aid items like burn and insect bite ointments, strapping and bandaging.
- Check with your vet to see if you may require specialised items for your horses.
- Feed, water and any medication.

Keep these items together in an easily accessible place.

Preparing your horse

On days of elevated Fire Danger Ratings there are several steps you can consider to prepare your horses:

- Practise floating your horses if you intend to move them.



- Practise having other people catch, halter and float your horses.
- Practise moving your horses around the property so they know where internal gates are.
- Remove all flammable items from your horses, including rugs, fly veils, boots, halters/head collars.

Total Fire Ban Days

Total Fire Bans are classified as Severe, Extreme and Catastrophic depending on the level of risk for the day.

The declaration of a Total Fire Ban, usually after 4:30pm the day before, should be the trigger for you to activate your Bushfire Survival Plan.

When a Total Fire Ban is announced, consider the following:

- Move your horses to a safer paddock.
- Open internal gates to allow your horse to move freely.
- Remove all flammable items from your horse - rugs, head collars/halters, fly veils etc.
- Check troughs are full, and if required fill additional containers with water for back-up.
- Check your Bushfire Survival Plan to make sure you have prepared fully.

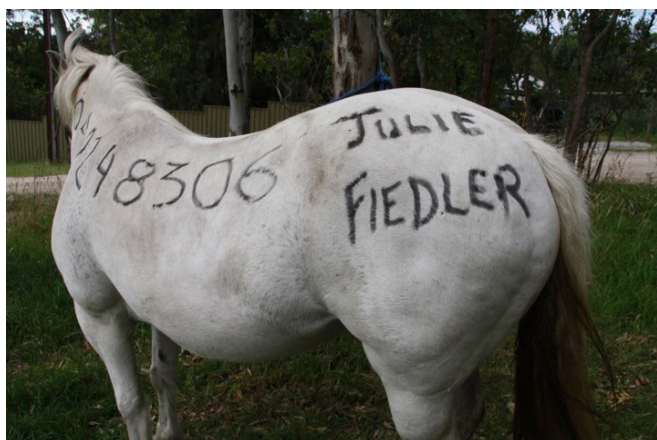
Looking after horses in bushfires

Decide whether you will 'Stay and Defend' or 'Leave Early' before there is a fire.

Identify your horses

Micro-chipped or branded horses are easily identified if they become separated from their owner.

In an emergency, if your horses are not chipped or branded, be prepared to paint your name and phone number on your horse.



Consider using a grease crayon to write on your horses.

Have a photo of you with the horses in case you are required to prove ownership.

When a bushfire happens

Once the bushfire starts or is close, visibility will be very poor and travel hazardous.

Fallen trees, powerlines, abandoned cars and even fire fighting vehicles can easily block roads.

Even quiet horses may panic in a float filled with smoke or when exposed to the noise of sirens.

You should plan to receive no official warning that a fire is coming.

When a fire comes your way, your personal safety and that of the people with you must be your first concern.

If your Bushfire Survival Plan is to stay and defend, consider the following:

- Open internal gates and let your horses run free within your property.
- Close the doors to stables/sheds to prevent your horse from running inside.

Leaving late may put you and your horses at risk.

Never turn your horses out on the road as they will be in danger from traffic and the fire or could cause a car accident.

Remember to give your horses plenty of room to move.

There is little you can do as the fire front passes, so leave your horses in an open area and go inside a solid structure to seek shelter from radiant heat.

Do not put your own life in danger.

Your horses will usually cope well on their own if they have a chance to move in an open space that has minimum burnable fuels.



Looking after horses in bushfires

Past experience of bushfires indicates that horses will suffer minimal burns if given maximum space.

They may gallop through flames, or around a fire's edges, and stand on the blackened, previously burnt area and remain there until the fire has passed.

The main fire front usually passes relatively quickly.

After the fire front has passed, and you feel that it is safe, carefully check on your horses, reassure and calm them, and make sure they have water readily available, then call your vet.

Administer any required treatments or medicines you are able to before your vet arrives.

Some symptoms will not show up until days later, so keep monitoring the health of your horses in the days following the fire.



For more information on how to make a Bushfire Survival Plan go to www.cfs.gov.au



For help following a bushfire contact www.pir.sa.gov.au, www.rspcasa.org.au or South Australian Veterinary Emergency Management (SAVEM) www.savem.org.au/



For more tips on how to prepare your horse for a bushfire see www.horsesa.asn.au

Re-entering burned areas

Care must be taken returning horses to burnt areas.

Check their water is not contaminated with ash or firefighting foam.

There may be hotspots that could flare up without warning – these can also burn the hooves and legs of your horses.

Partially burnt structures and trees may be unstable and suddenly fall over.

Roots may be smouldering under the surface, which may cause the ground to collapse and injure your horses if walked over.

Bees and wasps may swarm as they try to establish a new home.

Check all fencing is secure and free from breaks or sharp edges.

Check electric fences for faults and breakages.

Feed such as hay should be placed off the ground, so animals are not eating grit or ash with their food.

Good forward planning may protect the safety and wellbeing of your horses if you live in a high-risk bushfire area.

