

Bushfire ready - prepare, act, survive

The people in dairy – family, employees and contractors – are the core to successfully preparing for, responding to and recovering from an emergency or disaster.

As with everything to do with safety on a dairy farm, there are so many aspects to this topic. Every farm is different – fire risks vary from region to region, and from farm to farm. But there is lots to learn from others' experiences in previous fires.

Preparing your dairy farm for fire threat

According to the CFA, the number one fire safety objective is: 'Plan for and undertake fire safety, asset protection and asset recovery activities, with safety as a priority.'

Under legislation, landowners and managers have a responsibility for the safety of all people living, working on or visiting their property. Landowners and managers are advised to consider safety, environmental and legal issues and long-term sustainability with safety as a priority.

The CFA urges anyone in a high fire risk area to develop a written survival plan that takes into account all people who live or work on their property. There should also be a backup plan in case you are caught in a fire.

A fire survival plan should be a three-step plan based on:

- Preparation – farm, stock, plant and people management
- Response – putting preparation into action
- Recovery – getting back to normal as soon as possible

Preparing a fire survival plan

Visit the extreme weather pages on the Dairy Australia website for tools, fact sheets and important links, including the 'Preparing your dairy farm for fire threat toolkit' – produced in conjunction with the CFA.

Visit: www.dairyaustralia.com.au/farm/land-water-carbon/climate/preparing-for-bushfire

Essential 'people' steps before the fire season

- Nominate an emergency coordinator.
- Have a routine in place for fire risk days (moving stock and limiting or postponing machinery use, switching off electric fences). Make sure everyone on your property is aware of it.
- Know your trigger to leave early on fire risk days and the trigger to leave for family members, employees or contractors. Plan for contingencies such as children at school.
- If you have private fire-fighting equipment, conduct a 'refresher' session with family and employees to make sure everyone can use it.
- Emergency response procedures should be included in an induction program, with regular 'refresher' sessions.

Note: the best way to train workers is to practice the established procedures at least twice per year.

This factsheet is designed to get you started and is integrated with the resources on The People in Dairy - use the documents and links below to learn more.

Induction checklist:

www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/LiteratureRetrieve.aspx?ID=14007

Factsheet - How disaster effects everyone:

<http://www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/LiteratureRetrieve.aspx?ID=128503>

Factsheet - Personal responses to disaster:

www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/LiteratureRetrieve.aspx?ID=128505

Further information and contacts

Dairy Australia:

www.dairyaustralia.com.au/farm/land-water-carbon/climate/preparing-for-bushfire

Disaster Assist:

www.disasterassist.gov.au/Pages/home.aspx

Country Fire Authority (CFA) www.cfa.vic.gov.au

If you have been affected by a natural disaster such as a cyclone, flood or bushfire, please visit:

-Australian Government Disaster Assist
www.disasterassist.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx or call Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment Emergency Assistance Hotline: 180 22 66

-Queensland Disaster Recovery
www.qld.gov.au/community/disasters-emergencies/recovery-after-disaster
Hotline: 1800 173 349

-NSW Government: Ministry for Police & Emergency Services
www.emergency.nsw.gov.au

-South Australian Government: Fire & Energy Services Commission at
www.safecom.sa.gov.au/site/home.jsp

-Victorian Government: Department of Human Services Emergency Assistance at
www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/crisis-and-emergency/emergency-assistance or call 1300 650 172

-Western Australia Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements Administrator:
(08) 9323 9552

- Lifeline www.lifeline.org.au or 13 11 14

Response - working under the threat of bushfire (and hot & windy conditions)

Ensure everyone has access to reliable communications equipment and stays alert.

Tips: stay tuned to local ABC radio and mobile phone alerts, and monitor social media.

- Genuinely consult with staff regarding their physical and mental preparedness to come to work in extremely hot, dry and windy conditions. Take into account their family and community service obligations, the safety of their travel to and from the farm, their general health, and their ability to cope should an emergency arise.
- Stand down all unnecessary personnel.
- If you are intending to leave, the safest option is to relocate your family and staff early in the morning or the night before.
- Make sure all staff and family members are clear about the fire survival plan and who is doing what and when.
- Highlight the necessity of wearing protective clothing and staying hydrated. Have emergency evacuation procedures to include matters such as:
 - Where to safely assemble
 - Safe exit routes (ie which routes are open and closed)
 - The closest designated 'safe place'
 - Vehicles fuelled and ready to go
 - Consistency with the evacuation procedures of the relevant local authorities (CFA and police).

Not everyone thinks clearly in an emergency.

A written and well-practiced plan will help everyone remember what needs to be done during a fire.

You should also consider the life experience of the staff involved. For example, a seasoned farm manager will usually have a better handle on the situation than a young overseas backpacker.

Recovery – getting back to normal as soon as possible

Emotions can run high during and after a bushfire. We may have family, friends, property or livestock directly affected by the tragedy. It can be particularly distressing to tend to injured livestock.

It is important to understand the impact disasters can have on you, your family and your employees, especially when dealing with burnt and injured stock. Others may have friends or family directly affected by the tragedy.