



Animals affected by fire

Advice for livestock, lifestyle block, horse and pet owners

Your animals are your responsibility. You need to include them in your planning in the event of an emergency. The following information will help you prepare to ensure the welfare of your animals in a fire.

Evacuation plan

Look after yourself, your family, any workers and your neighbours. Ask for help if you need it.

If you have to evacuate, take your pets with you – if you can do so safely – or take them to a safe shelter place.

If you have to leave your animals behind, make sure they're in a safe place, well away from any fire risk.

On extreme fire-risk days and in high-risk areas, leave your property the night before or early in the morning. Late evacuation can be a deadly option.

Make sure emergency services can easily find you. Large reflective numbers should be displayed at the road front of your property.

Make sure emergency services have quick and easy access to farm buildings containing animals and a water source, should they need it.

Plan alternative escape routes from your property in the event that your main access is blocked. Or make sure you have another plan, such as sprinklers and a safer area you can move to.

If you have to evacuate your animals, check you have an appropriate vehicle to transport them to a safe shelter place.

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Federated Farmers (**0800 327 646 (0800 FARMING)**) or your local Civil Defence Centre may be able to provide advice if you need assistance with evacuating your animals and finding a safe shelter place to contain them.

Containing livestock

If you can stay on your property, check all animals are contained and that fences have not been destroyed by fire.

Consider opening gates within your property to allow stock easy access to safe ground. Do not open gates onto roadways or cut roadside fences.

Make sure your animals have access to clean feed and water in their new contained space until they can be returned to their paddocks.

Protect your fences from fire by keeping grass away. Spray herbicide in late winter up to a metre either side of the fence, stifling grass growth and reducing fire-risk.

If you need assistance finding a safe place to contain your stock, contact Federated Farmers on **0800 327 646 (0800 FARMING)** or your local Civil Defence Centre.

If you need help to reinstate fencing, contact your local Emergency Centre, the Rural Support Trust **0800 787 254 (0800 RURAL HELP)** or Federated Farmers on **0800 327 646 (0800 FARMING)**.



See full First Aid Kit checklist [here](#).



Safe Shelter

If you need to move your animals, ask your neighbours if they're able to contain them on their property. Large scale evacuations are usually coordinated by organisations such as Federated Farmers and dairy companies.

For alternative shelter options (animal shelters, saleyards or showgrounds), contact your local Civil Defence Centre.

If you can sacrifice a grazing paddock, plough it so that it's free of anything that can burn. If you can't, identify a safer area that's free of anything that will fuel a fire.

Safer areas should be away from dense vegetation, scrub, bush or forest.

Be aware of the dangers from intense radiant heat - it can kill animals.

Safer areas should be fenced, have water supply, short pasture, and protection from radiant heat.

Animal injuries

In a fire, animals may panic and flee to escape the smoke and heat, taking out any obstacles in their way. Check your animals, including their hooves/pads/feet/udders for wounds and injuries.

While external burns to the skin may be easy to see, your animals could also be suffering from internal burns, particularly to the lungs due to smoke inhalation.

On high risk fire days, remove any flammable gear, such as rugs, harnesses, halters and fly veils, and anything that contains metal (in the case of horses). Most rugs are a polyester/cotton blend, if they catch fire they'll melt onto the animal's skin.

Unlike people, animals tend to hide their pain making it difficult to detect. If you think your animals have sustained internal burns or they look as though they are having difficulty breathing, contact your veterinarian immediately.

For extensive burn injuries, euthanasia may be the best option.

Animals in stress

Following an emergency event, animals can show signs of stress in different ways. Find out more information for pets in the Behavioural Advice section below.

Feed and water

If the water is not safe for you to drink, it is not safe for your animals.

Make sure all animals have access to clean water.

Remove any ash and debris from stock water.

Have a primary and secondary water supply in the event your main water supply is damaged in a fire.

Give your pets bottled or boiled water.

Allow enough food and water for at least five days. Most animals need 60ml/kg/24 hours each to sustain hydration levels.

Pasture and stored feed may be contaminated by fire. Make sure you have supplemental feed available for your animals.

Prioritise feeding to high priority animals - high value stock or vulnerable stock (e.g. stock close to giving birth, young stock).

Check irrigation lines to the water trough have not melted in the fire.

Check water tanks supplied by roof collection and clean the roof and gutters of any ash.

If you need assistance sourcing water and supplemental food for your pets, contact your local Civil Defence Centre.

If you need assistance sourcing water and feed - or have excess feed to donate/sell - for your livestock and other animals, contact Federated Farmers on **0800 327 646 (0800 FARMING)**.

Eliminate potential fire risks

Don't oil fences, posts and rails. It may stop horses from chewing them but it's fuel for a fire.

On a total fire ban day, turn off electric fences to reduce risk of igniting a fire.

Check farm buildings have no gaps (walls/floors/ceilings) to prevent embers getting in.

Metal fly wire keeps embers out from under buildings while still allowing airflow.

Animals affected by fire **Livestock, lifestyle block, horse and pet owners**

Damp or incorrectly cured hay can spontaneously combust. Don't store it next to animals or farm equipment.

Protect your assets by keeping flammable materials away from farm buildings.

Keep grass away from buildings and lay gravel so there's nothing to burn.

Clean farm buildings to keep cobwebs and dust to a minimum..

Support and assistance

For general advice and assistance, contact your local Civil Defence Centre.

For general information about road access and telecommunications, contact your local Council's civil defence team.

For farmer support, contact the Rural Support Trust on **0800 787 254 (0800 RURAL HELP)**.

Reporting lost animals

Identification may be difficult if an animal's ID tag has been torn off in their attempt to flee the fire.

If you find a farm animal and are not sure about ownership, contact your Local Council Animal Management or SPCA.

If you find a pet animal that you do not own and it needs immediate medical attention, please take it to your local vet or SPCA.

If you need help with animal rescue, contact your local SPCA or local CDEM.

If you find injured native wildlife contact Department of Conservation. For non-native species contact your local veterinarian or SPCA.

If you have lost or found a pet post the details on **www.petsonthenet.co.nz**, the New Zealand Companion Animal Register **0800 LOSTPET (0800 567873)** or a local veterinarian.

Useful contacts

Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management – **www.civildefence.govt.nz/**

Local CDEM – **http://www.civildefence.govt.nz/find-your-civil-defence-group/**

Fire and Emergency Service – **Dial 111**

Police – **Dial 111**

Rural Support Trust – Phone **0800 787 254 (0800 RURAL HELP)**

Ministry for Primary Industries (Animal Welfare) – Phone **0800 00 83 33**

Federated Farmers – Phone **0800 FARMING (0800 327 646)**

Local Animal Control – contact your local Council

Behaviour of pets in emergencies

Animals react in different ways to emergency events such as flooding, earthquakes and fire. Your pet may be anxious, fearful, aggressive, clingy, or they may not show signs of stress at all. The following advice will help if your pet is stressed.

Animal's reactions may be different to normal. Signs to look out for that can indicate an animal is anxious or stressed include:

Dogs

- licking lips;
- yawning;
- obvious gaze;
- constantly standing and looking around;
- tail tucked, ears back, head down and shaking;
- clingy;
- reactive to noise, people and other animals;
- fear aggression towards people and other animals – watch for signs, do not punish or confront, give them space, back away;
- agitated.

Cats

- often passive signs such as hiding, shut down/sleeping;
- over grooming.

Some dogs and cats develop fears/phobias and anxiety to water, objects, unfamiliar people, familiar and unfamiliar animals, sounds, rain and may suffer from separation anxiety if left alone. If they must be left alone, put them in a safe place that they cannot escape from (garage, kennel, crate, cage), provide toys/distractions and put some music on. Where phobias are severe and the animal is likely to hurt itself or damage property, avoid leaving the animal alone and see your veterinarian regarding advice and treatment options.

Ways to decrease anxiety: developing a routine is helpful. Try to keep meal times consistent. Try to be calm around your pets; they will pick up on your anxiety also. Comfort each other if this is not distressing to your pet.

Exercise your pet if it is safe to do so.

Providing your cat or dog's usual bedding, and/or a piece of your clothing that smells like you, may assist their anxiety level. Pheromone products are available for cats and dogs can also help reduce anxiety. They come in spray bottles or as plug-in dispensers (which need electricity) and are available from veterinary clinics.

For more information about preparing and planning for your animals in an emergency, visit www.mpi.govt.nz/animals-in-emergencies