



# Keeping Your Animals Safe in an Emergency

in the Hawkesbury–Nepean region

Are you ready? Make a plan for ALL your family

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# Are you an animal owner?



**Floods, fires and other emergencies can happen at any time and with little warning.**

**Your animals WILL affect how quickly and easily you can evacuate if there is an emergency.**

**This brochure will help you to:**

- determine the risk to you and your animals
- develop a PLAN, which includes your animals
- identify where to take your animals and how you will get there safely
- understand emergency warnings and act early
- make ALL your animals identifiable for their safety
- prepare a 'Grab and Go' kit
- plan for the unexpected — in case you are not at home
- make preparations for the animals you can't take with you
- build an 'Animal Ready Community'

# Am I at risk?

To make a good plan, you need to know the risks in your local area.

Do you live in or near a floodplain, near a creek or in a low-lying area? Is your area subject to flash flooding? Do you know what height your property is?

**If you live in the Hawkesbury-Nepean you are on a floodplain and need to understand your risk of flooding.**

Do you live in or near bushland, a nature reserve, National Park or close to grasslands?

**If you live in the Hawkesbury-Nepean you need to understand if you live in a high fire risk area.**

You may also be at risk from severe storms and heatwaves.

It's important to think about any severe weather events you may experience at your property or in your local area. Also consider you could be affected by road closures or power outages.

## How do I find out what my risks are?

- For bush fire on the NSW Rural Fire Service website: [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/know-your-risk](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/know-your-risk)
- For flood on the NSW State Emergency Service website: [www.ses.nsw.gov.au/your-local-risk/](http://www.ses.nsw.gov.au/your-local-risk/)
- For flood information in Hawkesbury-Nepean by suburb: [www.myfloodrisk.nsw.gov.au](http://www.myfloodrisk.nsw.gov.au)
- Visit your local council's website for information





## Hawkesbury–Nepean Valley

The Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley has a long history of flooding. There have been about 130 moderate to major floods in the valley since records began in the 1790s.

Floods in the Hawkesbury-Nepean pose a significant risk to people's lives, livelihoods and homes because of the valley's unique landscape and the size of its population.

The Hawkesbury-Nepean floodplain is fed by five rivers. When there is heavy rainfall, water from the rivers flows into the floodplain, but is held back on its way to the ocean by more than 100 kilometres of narrow gorges. This causes floodwaters in this area to back up and rise rapidly, causing wide, deep and dangerous floods.

The largest flood in living memory happened in November 1961, when the water reached 14.5 metres above normal river height at Windsor, flooding several hundred homes.

**Remember that floods can happen in any year and sometimes without much warning. It's important for everyone who lives in the floodplain to be prepared.**

For more information you can visit [www.myfloodrisk.nsw.com.au](http://www.myfloodrisk.nsw.com.au)

Bush fire is also a significant risk to many families and properties throughout the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley. Large portions of the Hawkesbury are bush fire prone.

# Animals in an Emergency

Be aware that your animals may behave differently in an emergency.

Animals, like humans, can feel stressed and anxious in an emergency. They may also pick up on your stress.

Animals will be affected by environmental changes that occur in an emergency — like floodwater, smoke, heat, flames, loud noises and sirens.

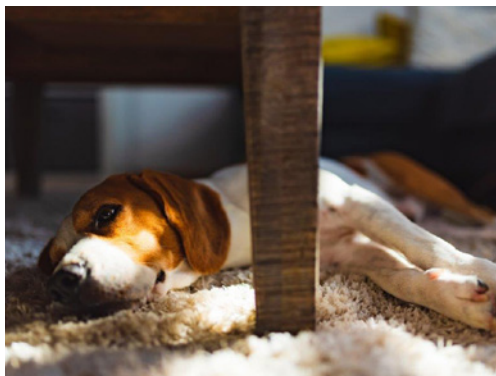
When animals are frightened they can become aggressive, can bite, scratch or kick (even if this is not part of their normal behaviour).

If animals are anxious, they could hide, run away or be difficult to move.

**Prepare your animals early.**

- With smaller animals you can put them in their crate, or in a room, where they are safe and contained.
- With larger animals, you can load them on a float or trailer, or move them close at hand in preparation for when you leave.
- If your animals are secure and safe, this will leave you free to take care of other members of your family.

**If you act early your WHOLE family will be ready to leave when you need to move to safety.**



# How you can prepare as an animal owner

Over 90% of owners consider their animals to be family. Your animals WILL affect how quickly and easily you can evacuate if there is an emergency.

Most people have close bonds with their animals and will want to save them in an emergency — even if that means putting their own safety at risk. So it is important to be prepared, and to have plans for what you will do in an emergency, like a flood or bush fire.

**To keep your animals safe in an emergency, make them a part of your plan.**

Remember, you are responsible for your animals. Don't expect someone to come and rescue them for you. Have a plan for ALL your animals. You need to plan for the animals you can take with you and any animals you may need to leave behind.

## Your best approach is to:

- understand your level of risk
- have a plan and be as self-reliant as you can
- discuss your plan with family, friends and neighbours
- be alert to worsening weather conditions and official warnings
- identify options to keep your animals safe
- act early



# Develop a plan ... and include all your animals

This is a plan for what you would do for your family, including your animals, in the event of severe storms and floods, bush fires, heat waves and other extreme weather events.

Remember: In an emergency **you** are responsible for the welfare of your animals. You are also responsible for managing your animals so they do not present a danger to other people or animals.

## What should my plan include for my animals?

- Where to go and how to get there — planning to stay with family or friends is often the most comfortable and convenient option.
- What to take for your animals — prepare a ‘Grab and Go’ kit.
- How to identify, secure and transport your animals.
- If you have large animals like horses and livestock, a plan to relocate them early to a safer area.

**Remember to practice your plan at least once a year.**





# Plan on a Page

## What I will do with my animals during an emergency

Animals need to go with you if you have to evacuate your home. It is safer for them and for you.

Please take a few minutes to complete this plan.

### STEP 1 What I will take for my animal(s) if we have to leave

Decide the essential things your animal(s) needs for 3-7 days. You may not be able to get home for a while. You can pack them into a *Grab and Go Bag*, so you are ready to leave quickly. Remember to take it with you wherever you go.

My Grab and Go Bag is located here:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food and Treats    | <input type="checkbox"/> Identification Tags                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bowls/Buckets/Tubs | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo with owner                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Any medicines      | <input type="checkbox"/> Toileting requirements              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toys               | <input type="checkbox"/> Registration and vaccination papers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bedding            |  |

Microchipping your animal and registering them with the NSW Pet Registry at [www.petregistry.nsw.gov.au](http://www.petregistry.nsw.gov.au) will help reunite them with you if separated during an emergency.

### STEP 2 How I will contain and transport my animal(s)

Check you have enough crates, carriers, cages and leads. Also work out with your transport how many trips you will need to take.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crate/Carrier        | <input type="checkbox"/> Car/Float        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cage/Other container | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends Car      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lead/Harness         | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Transport |

Remember to secure/contain your animals asap, so they are safe while you get ready and close at hand so you can leave quickly.

### STEP 3 When and where I will go to be safe with my animal(s)

Leaving early and going to stay with family/friends is often most comfortable and convenient.

Evacuation centres may be opened and you can always take your animals along with you.

Stay informed by listening to ABC and local radio and going to the emergency service links provided below.

- I will be going to family/friends house with my animal(s). Their details are:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

- If I am not home, our family/friend/ neighbour knows what to do. Their details are:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

- I will relocate my animal/livestock early to:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

### STEP 4 This plan is on my fridge, in my phone and given to my family/friend/ neighbour

Names: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thanks for making a plan. Stay safe, and remember to leave early if you need to evacuate

[www.getreadyanimals.nsw.gov.au](http://www.getreadyanimals.nsw.gov.au)



**GET READY**  
Animals

# Where are you taking your animals?

Decide well in advance the safest locations for your animals.

- Discuss with your friends and family if you can stay with them in an emergency and if you can bring your animals.
- Talk with your pony or equestrian club or reach out to animal groups on how you can support one another in an emergency. Create a network to communicate and act if you need to relocate your larger animals (e.g. horses, alpacas).
- Work with neighbours and friends to plan together.

Think about ...

- How you will transport your animals? Will you need to make more than one journey? How long will it take?
- Do you have a cage for each cat? Do you have a collar and leash or crate for each dog? Does your dog need a muzzle?
- Have you practised loading your horses onto a float?
- Do you own a float? Is it registered and well maintained? If not, can you borrow a float?



# How will you get to safety?

Think about the routes you could take to relocate your family and animals.

Develop your plan to allow for changes such as bridges being cut or if roads become heavily congested, blocked or even closed.

Leaving early is the safest option.

During flooding events there are special evacuation routes to get you and your family to safety. Follow the flood evacuation route signs (see right) and listen to ABC Radio for current evacuation information.

Bush fires can move extremely fast. During a bush fire always follow the advice of the authorities.

Listen to media announcements (television, radio and online) as well as local radio and ABC local radio (702 AM).



# Listen to warnings ...

- Pay attention to your local weather forecasts, bush fire alert levels or local flood watch (indication of a developing weather pattern that might cause floods in one or two days).
- Monitor media, especially ABC Radio and local community radio for emergency information.
- Social media and mobile apps may also provide valuable information, e.g. NSW SES Facebook page, NSW SES Hawkesbury and Penrith units Facebook pages, NSW RFS 'Fires Near Me' app.

## .... and act early

- Stay calm, think clearly and put your plan into action
- Give yourself plenty of time to deal with any unforeseen problems
- Put your plan into place early — if you need to make more than one trip and/or to move large animals to a safe location
- Check with your local council and Live Traffic for road closure information [www.livetraffic.com](http://www.livetraffic.com)

Be prepared and relocate your animals to safety early — this can reduce stress for them and for you.



# Animal identification



**Permanently identify your animals. This will help reunite you and your animals if separated during an emergency.**

- Microchips are best for most animals.
- Ensure your personal details are up-to-date on the NSW Pet Registry.
- Take clear photos of your animals showing any distinct markings.
- Place a collar on your smaller animals with your name and phone number.
- Place ID tags or labels on any pet carriers.
- Horses can have emergency contact information attached to their mane through a tag e.g. Manestay.

**Ensure your small acreage has a Property Identification Code (PIC)**

A PIC number helps NSW Department of Primary Industries, Local Land Services and emergency services to know what animals you have in case of emergency.

**Contact your Local Land Services office for advice.**

# Prepare a ‘Grab and Go’ kit

Prepare an evacuation kit for all your animals. You should be able to maintain your animals for 3 to 7 days.

Consider restraint and transport, food, water, toileting, medications, first aid, housing and bedding:

- cages or pet carriers for each animal; or
- muzzle and leash; or lead rope and head collar for each animal
- 3-7 days of food and water for each animal
- bowl or feed bucket
- can opener and spoon
- woollen blanket, towels or bedding
- animal medications and first aid items
- take a photo of your pet’s vaccination certificate
- litter and litter tray for cats
- poo bags for dogs
- toys
- and whatever else you feel is essential for the first 3 to 7 days.



Store your ‘Grab and Go’ kit where it’s easy to locate. If you can’t store everything — have a checklist of what you need to grab before you go!

# What if you're not at home?

**When developing a good plan, be aware that you might not be at home.**

When an emergency strikes you could be at work, on holidays or restricted from getting home (e.g. road closures).



## So make sure:

- everyone who lives, works or agists at your property knows your plan
- your neighbours, friends and family know your plan
- spare keys to padlocked gates are available for others to use if necessary
- you have a list of people you can call who are willing and able to help relocate or evacuate your animals if you are not at home.



**Remember that in an emergency phone lines can be down and people might be hard to reach. Talking about your plan with family, friends and neighbours BEFORE an emergency gives you the best chance to keep your animals safe.**

# What if you can't take all your animals with you?



**Sometimes you may not be able to take your animals with you. Be prepared to give them the best chance to stay safe.**

- Ensure all animals have access to feed and fresh water in a heat resistant trough for at least 3-7 days as you may not be able to return to your property.
- Allow animals to roam freely. Do not tether them.
- For stock, horses or non-indoor pets, prepare a safe paddock or refuge.
- If a safer refuge is unavailable, fix internal gates in an open position or cut internal fencing. This can give large animals opportunity to escape danger.
- NEVER open the external gates to your property. Animals loose on external roads are at great danger to themselves, other drivers and emergency services.
- Leave indoor pets inside in separate rooms with small or no windows.
- Ensure all animals can be identified, such as with brands, microchips, NLIS, tags or have photos of distinctive markings in case they become lost. A mobile number written on both sides of large animals can assist.
- Remove rugs, halters, and if possible metal shoes, as they may be flammable, melt, cause burns or snag.





## Create a refuge

- Minimise trees and/or use low flammability trees.
- Identify and then clear away any obstacles that could burn or entangle your animals.
- Provide multiple solid water troughs.



## Fire

- Heavily graze or plough a paddock to remove fuel for fire, use a green summer crop and/or use firebreaks at least 6m wide.
- Use low flammability hedges, walls/buildings or earth banks to provide protection from radiant heat.

## Flood

- Locate or build an area of higher ground above the area of your property that will be affected by floodwaters.

# Build an ‘Animal Ready Community’



## Help other animal owners in your community to become ‘Animal Ready’. Here’s how:

- have a conversation with your neighbours about their plan for their animals in an emergency.
- have a conversation at your local pony club or sports club to share ideas and options for keeping your animals safe in an emergency.
- buddy-up with friends or neighbours and make plans to help each other if you are not there — or can’t get back in an emergency.
- share information with other animal owners e.g. talk with people who agist on the same property and see how you can make plans to support each other.
- research your options — where could you relocate your animals that is outside your local area?
- keep up to date with community initiatives — like ‘Get Ready’ events.
- join online communities — for example, animal-related groups on Facebook where you can share ideas and plan to support each other in an emergency.

This booklet has been created to provide general information to animal owners in the Hawkesbury-Nepean to become an 'Animal Ready Community'.

**An 'Animal Ready Community' aims to understand the risks and challenges facing animals and those people who care for them during emergencies, and works together to prepare for future events.**

The production of this booklet was made through the assistance and support of the NSW SES Hawkesbury Unit, Greater Sydney Local Land Services, NSW Department of Primary Industries, Agnes Banks Equine Clinic, Hawkesbury City Council, NSW Rural Fire Service, Dr Mel Taylor, Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre and Infrastructure NSW.

Thank you to Blue ARC and the Blue Mountains Resilience & Preparedness group for their support of this booklet and the creation of the original Keeping Your Animals Safe in an Emergency — in the Blue Mountains region.

## Where to find more information

**Department of Primary Industries** — [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au)

- Before an emergency
- Pet safety in emergencies
- Horse safety in emergencies
- Livestock safety in emergencies

**Local Land Services** — [www.greatersydney.lls.nsw.gov.au](http://www.greatersydney.lls.nsw.gov.au)

- Property Identification Codes

**NSW Pet Registry** — [www.petregistry.nsw.gov.au](http://www.petregistry.nsw.gov.au)

- Update your personal details

**RSPCA** — [www.rspcansw.org.au](http://www.rspcansw.org.au)

- Owning a pet — Disaster Management Plans

**NSW State Emergency Service** — [www.ses.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ses.nsw.gov.au)

- Get Ready Animals
- Home Emergency Plan
- Animal Emergency Plan
- FloodSafe for your pets and animals
- StormSafe: Pet Fact Sheet

**NSW Rural Fire Service** — [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au)

- Your guide to making a bush fire plan
- Fires Near Me
- Prepare Your Horse for a Bush Fire

**WIRES (NSW Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service Inc.)** — [www.wires.org.au](http://www.wires.org.au)

- Injured wildlife