



Are you ready? Make a plan for ALL your family

# Keeping Your Animals Safe in an Emergency

in the Hawkesbury–Nepean region

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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** influence your decisions to relocate or evacuate in a timely manner from the threat of danger to you or your property.

Please read through this brochure to:

- Determine the risk to your family and animals
- Make a plan ... and include your animals
- Plan where you are taking your animals
- Plan how you will move your animals and how you will get there
- Ensure you can identify your animals
- Prepare a 'Grab and Go' kit
- Prepare a plan B for when you or your family are not at home
- Understand the warnings ... and act early
- Promote your "Animal Ready Community"
- Find out where to get advice.



# 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. Floodwaters in this area can back up and rise rapidly, causing wide, deep and dangerous floods.

The highest 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.

While there hasn't been a major flood in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley for over 25 years, floods can and will happen again.

**Floods can happen in any year, and sometimes without much warning. We need to be prepared.**

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.

# What can you do as an animal owner to be prepared?

Over 90% of owners consider their animals to be family. In an emergency, your animals will influence your decision to relocate or evacuate in a timely manner.

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 in danger. 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.

## Are your animals part of your plans for what to do in an emergency?

Remember, you are responsible for your animals. Don't expect someone to come and rescue them for you.



Your best approach is:

- Understand your level of risk
- Have a plan and be as self-reliant as you can
- Discuss your plan with your family, friends and neighbours
- Be alert to worsening weather conditions and official warnings
- Plan to take all your animals with you
- Leave early.



## Am I at risk?

**Your first job is to understand the level of risk associated with where you live.**

Do you live in or near the flood plain, nearby 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 floods.**

If you live near bushland, nature reserve, National Park or close to grasslands, you may live in high fire risk area. If you live in the Hawkesbury-Nepean you may also be in an area that is at risk from bush fires.

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

- Check first with your local council
- Then check *Know Your Risk* sections:
  - For flood on the NSW State Emergency Service website [www.ses.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ses.nsw.gov.au)
  - For bush fire on the NSW Rural Fire Service website [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au)

Make sure you and your family know your local risk.

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

If you own animals it is essential that you develop a plan.

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?

- A plan for early relocation of your animals to a safer place
- A plan on where to take your family and pets — Friends? Family? Sporting clubs?

Remember to practice your plan at least once a year.



# Where are you taking your animals?



Decide well in advance where you are taking your animals in an emergency or if notified to 'evacuate'.

The location of evacuation centres will not be known until the emergency is unfolding.

- Discuss with your friends and family if you can stay with them in an emergency and if you can bring your animals
- You can take companion animals (eg cat, dog, bird) to an evacuation centre if you have no other option
- Discuss with your pony club or equestrian sports club or group to find a safe location to temporarily relocate your larger animals (e.g. horses, alpacas)
- Work with neighbours and friends to plan together.

## Think about ...

- How will you transport your animals? Will you need to make more than one journey?
- 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, where can you borrow a float?



# How will you get there?

Think about the route you will take to get your family and animals to safety.

Have a plan A, B and C, based on where the dangers may be and what roads may be closed. **If you need to evacuate 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).



# 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.

**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. It 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 bag for dogs
- Toys
- and whatever else you feel is essential for the first 3 to 7 days.



Store your kit in an easily accessible location. If you can’t store everything — have a checklist of what you need to grab before you go!

# Always have a plan B



## What if you or your family are not at home?

### 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.

**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.**

# Listen to the 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, eg. NSW SES Facebook pages, NSW RFS 'Fires Near Me'.

## ... 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 to move large animals to a safe location
- Animals often behave differently during emergencies — they will pick up on your stress and may panic and run. Contain and secure your animals early, well before you need to leave home

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



# Promote your “Animal Ready Community”

Help other animal owners in your community to become “Animal Ready”.

- Have a conversation with your neighbours about their plan for their animals in an emergency
- Have a conversation with your local pony club or sports club about what their plans are to relocate animals in an emergency
- Have a conversation with other owners where you agist your horse about what their plans are to relocate animals 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 this information with other animal owners
- 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.

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## 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 disasters
- Horse safety in disasters
- Livestock safety in disasters

**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)

- Home 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