



PETS AND BUSHFIRES

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A GUIDE FOR PET OWNERS



DO YOU HAVE A PLAN?

If you live near bush, grassland or coastal areas, you need to develop a Bushfire Survival Plan that includes your pets. Whether pets are at home with you, relocated during high risk days or brought along on holidays, you need to plan and prepare for their safety as well as your family's and your own.

Prepare a Bushfire Survival Plan for your pets

- ✓ Decide whether you will keep your pets with you or move them elsewhere during days of high fire risk. Include these details in your Bushfire Survival Plan. Remember, on **Code Red** days the safest place to be is away from high-risk bushfire areas.
- ✓ If you choose to keep your pets with you, it's important to confine them early.
 - Pets are safest inside a secure room, on a lead or in carriers.
 - Make sure you have wet towels and woollen blankets available to cover and protect your pets.
 - Make sure they have plenty of water to drink.
- ✓ It is important that your pets are microchipped and wearing a collar identification tag at all times. Ensure all contact information is current and include an emergency contact outside your area that is linked to your pets' records. The National Pet Register provides free identification for cats and dogs. Visit petregister.com.au or call **1300 734 738**.
- ✓ Make a list of where you could house your pets if you decide to leave early. This may include boarding kennels, a relative/friend's place or you may be able to keep them with you.
- ✓ Discuss with neighbours how your pets might be protected in case you are not at home or cannot make it home during a bushfire. Keep in regular contact with your neighbours during the fire danger period to let them know your plans.
- ✓ Have a bushfire relocation kit (see over) for your pets stored within easy reach so you are ready to leave early.
- ✓ Practise how you will move your pets if you leave.
- ✓ If you take your pets on holiday into a high-risk bushfire area, make sure you prepare for their safety, along with your family's and your own, in the event of a bushfire.



PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.
FireReady 

Prepare a bushfire relocation kit for your pets

- Relocate your pets early on high fire danger days to a safer area. If you plan to relocate your pets, move them to a safer area well before a bushfire threatens. If you do not have friends or family in safer areas who can care for your pet, consider a boarding facility.
- If you relocate with your pets, make sure they are secured with a collar and lead or confined in a carrier. Make sure the carriers are clearly labelled with your contact details.

Your bushfire relocation kit for pets should include:

- ✔ food and water
- ✔ a bowl for each pet
- ✔ a second collar and lead
- ✔ a carrier for cats and smaller pets
- ✔ bedding and a woollen blanket
- ✔ a pet first aid kit – seek your vet's advice
- ✔ a favourite toy
- ✔ any medications your pet is taking plus a written list of them
- ✔ your pet's medical history including proof of vaccination
- ✔ your vet's contact details.

Personal safety during bushfire

Always put your own safety before the safety of your pets. Many deaths occur during bushfires when people are caught out in the open when leaving late, and are exposed to radiant heat.

Develop a personal Bushfire Survival Plan that will ensure your own safety. The safest option is for you to be well away from high-risk bushfire areas on **Severe, Extreme** or **Code Red** fire danger days.

If you cannot leave the area consider shelter options close by that may protect you. These may include:

- a well-prepared home (yours or a neighbour) that you can actively defend
- a private bunker (that meets current regulations)
- a designated community refuge.

Last resort options could include:

- a Neighbourhood Safer Place (**Place of Last Resort**)
- a stationary car in a cleared area
- a ploughed paddock or reserve
- a body of water (such as the beach, pool, dam or river). This does not include a water tank. Dams may not be reliable as their water levels fluctuate and they may be empty in summer.

Note that last resort options carry a high risk of trauma, injury or death.

Pet Care

Pet injuries after a fire

If your pets have suffered burn injuries during a fire, they must receive immediate treatment. As soon as it is safe to do so, take your pets to the nearest vet clinic or animal shelter.

Hot weather

Heat stress in dogs and cats occurs when they are unable to maintain their normal body temperature on a hot day. On all hot days, especially days of **Severe, Extreme** or **Code Red** fire danger, it is important that you keep your pets as cool as possible. Keeping your pets comfortable on a hot day is your responsibility. Look for the warning signs:

- excessive panting
- salivating
- pets that whine or seem agitated.

In cases of severe heat stress or heat stroke, pets may stop panting and vomit.

If your pet exhibits any of these symptoms, a vet should be consulted immediately. Keep your local vet's contact details in your Bushfire Survival Plan.

Ten tips for keeping your pets cool on hot days

- ➊ Have fresh, cold water available at all times.
- ➋ Ensure your pets have shade at all times or bring them inside into a cool room.
- ➌ Wipe your pets down with a cool, damp towel or leave wet towels out for them to lie on.
- ➍ Wet your dog with cool water several times throughout the day.
- ➎ Consider buying a wading pool for your dog.
- ➏ For cats, rub damp hands over their coat or along their tummy.
- ➐ Place ice blocks in your pet's water bowl.
- ➑ Place ice in a pillow case and place it near your pets.
- ➒ Consider having your dog clipped if their coat is long and thick.
- ➓ Never leave your pets in a vehicle on a hot day.

Further information

- Animal Welfare – Department of Primary Industries dpi.vic.gov.au
- Free pet identification – National Pet Register petregister.com.au or **1300 734 738**
- Bushfire safety and property preparation – CFA website cfa.vic.gov.au
- Victorian Bushfire Information Line **1800 240 667** (or via National Relay Service on **1800 555 677** if you are hearing impaired).

