



Integrity Systems

red meat customer assurance

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Natural Disaster Response — Bushfires



For producers impacted by bushfire, human and animal health and welfare are the priorities. Managing livestock after a bushfire can be challenging and stressful. Animals may be dead or injured; access to feed may be reduced; and fences and other equipment may be damaged.

Key actions

- ✓ Add disaster management plan to on-farm biosecurity planning
- ✓ Request a CVD for all purchased fodder
- ✓ Check access to feed, water and shade
- ✓ Prepare for agistment properly with inspection and research, biosecurity plan, written agreement and NLIS
- ✓ Manage property in accordance with LPA Rules & Standards

To ensure your livestock are properly cared for and that the requirements of Australia's red meat integrity system continue to be met in the event of a bushfire, the Integrity Systems Company (ISC) provides the following guidelines.

Planning for adversity

Disaster management plans can be an important component of producers' on-farm biosecurity planning. While not compulsory, they are invaluable in times of crisis and may include:

- Evacuation plans for people and livestock – including locations of where to move stock in a fire. Include a map that can be provided to others if you are not able to return.
- Plans for the purchase and storage of emergency fodder
- Plans for the provision of water if infrastructure is destroyed by fire
- List of emergency contact details: fire brigade, local council, state department of primary industry, local vet, emergency animal disease hotline **1800 675 888**
- Ongoing management to ensure that livestock are effectively identified and that stock transfers, stock registers and livestock vaccinations are up to date

Emergency fodder

Often the first requirement following a bushfire is the provision of food and water.

State/territory agencies, along with state farming organisations, may coordinate emergency fodder drops following natural disasters.

However, the welfare of livestock remains the responsibility of the livestock owner or their nominated representative.

When sourcing emergency fodder, exercise caution. Risks associated with purchasing from unfamiliar suppliers include chemical contamination, weed seed, restricted animal material, and poor quality or unsuitable feed for your class of livestock. Request a **Commodity Vendor Declaration (CVD)** for any purchased fodder. Keep a record of all feed that has been bought in and the animals it was fed to.

Longer term strategies may include the removal of livestock to another location where adequate food and water can be provided — such as an agistment paddock, stock route or feedlot, or the sale of livestock.

Animal treatment and humane destruction

Treatment for sick, injured or diseased animals must be provided at the first reasonable opportunity. Providing veterinary care for livestock following a bushfire may be difficult. Further information is available on the MLA website, see **Drought and Disaster Management**.

When humane destruction is necessary, appropriate methods must be used by people who have the experience, knowledge, skills and tools outlined in the **Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines** (cattle and sheep). Check with your local and state authorities for advice on appropriate carcass disposal methods and specific health risks in your area.

Regular monitoring of livestock is recommended, following a bushfire. Restrict unnecessary activity or handling while livestock are recovering. Animals that have been through a natural disaster are susceptible to parasite attack, so monitor for ticks, flies, lice, worms and nuisance insects.

If there have been changes to your paddocks and facilities, such as the burning of fences — then assess what your livestock can access. You may need to provide shade to replace lost vegetation or structures.

Meeting LPA requirements

The Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) program is the Australian red meat industry’s on-farm assurance program underpinned by seven key elements covering food safety, animal welfare and biosecurity. If you manage your property in accordance with the **LPA Rules & Standards** following the bushfire, there will be no issues with your LPA accreditation.

If livestock have moved to neighbouring properties, consider risks around pest, disease and biosecurity for your own property when you bring them home. LPA’s **Farm Biosecurity Plan template** outlines recommended practices for returning livestock to your property.

Use of NLIS following a bushfire

The NLIS database can be used to reconcile your livestock numbers and update the number of head that are on your property. You can also notify the database of any animals that have **died on your property**.

Agistment

Following bushfire, agistment can provide welcome relief, offering feed or safety to livestock. However, all livestock movements, especially after a natural disaster, pose an added biosecurity risk. Key actions when agisting stock include:

- Inspect the property or send a trusted representative, such as a stock agent
- If you are an LPA accredited producer:
 - Make enquiries to ensure you know about any contaminated sites or potential chemical exposure on the PIC
 - Confirm that the property is LPA accredited
 - Check if the PIC has any statuses assigned to it on the **NLIS database**.

There can be implications to consider for livestock returning or being sold from non-LPA accredited PICs or from PICs with an assigned status.

- Prepare a written agreement between the agister (owner of the stock) and the landowner, outlining roles and responsibilities
- Have a biosecurity plan that includes isolation of livestock when moving to or returning home from agistment
- Record all stock movements between PICs in the NLIS database

Further assistance

Further assistance is available via your State Department of Agriculture or your state farmer organisation.



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