

# Reminders for the Bushfire Season

Conditions for the upcoming 2014-2015 bushfire risk period is concerning. All weather outlooks are anticipating a hotter than normal summer with an above average bushfire season predicted. With the recent outlook from the Bushfire & Natural Hazards CRC (BNHCRC) indicating the threat of a potential major fire season, this presents the opportunity for some timely reminders on dealing bushfires and livestock.



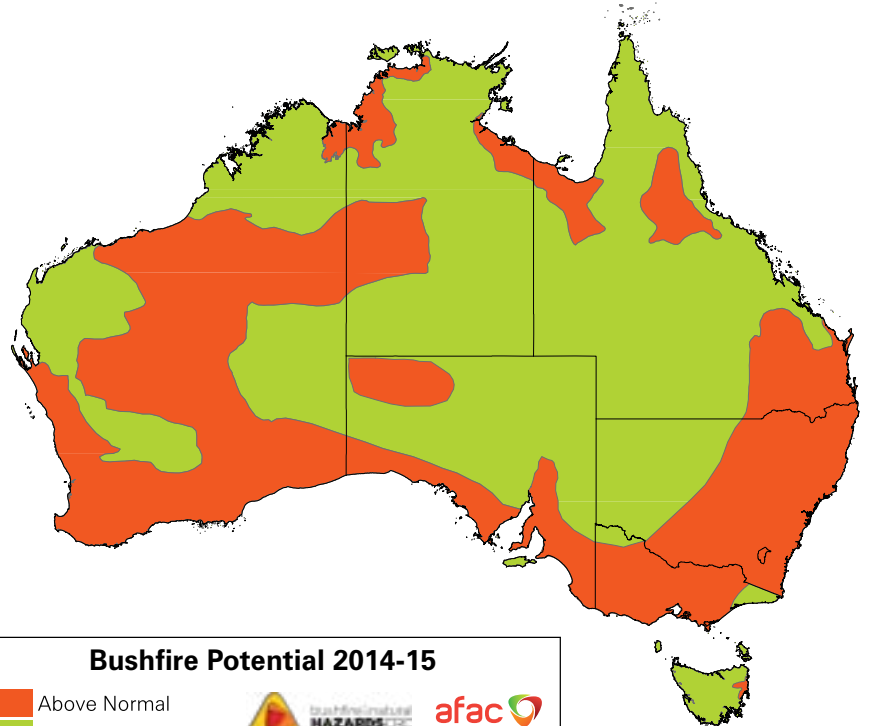
## Key reminders for livestock safety

- Select or create a heavily grazed area, cultivated, slashed or 'green' area where stock can be moved to during a bush fire with access to water and extra protection such as laneways or firebreaks.
- Due to the behavioural instincts of sheep it may be more suitable to place them in wetted down, non-flammable yards with surrounding fire breaks until the fire passes.
- Identify a possible containment area to feed stock after the fire has passed.
- Make sure all your livestock are easily identifiable.
- If not already done so, it may be a good time to update your stock inventory prior to bushfire season and keep a copy of records off property.
- Roadside fences should not be cut as loose stock can cause accidents and fences should be stock proof without electricity.

## Accessing Your Property

The Victorian Police are responsible for managing traffic, including roadblocks during a bushfire with clear procedures around when a vehicle can pass a roadblock.

## SOUTHERN AUSTRALIA SEASONAL BUSHFIRE OUTLOOK 2014-15: NOVEMBER UPDATE



The management and location of roadblocks has caused frustration among farmers as urgent access to livestock has been prevented.

This year, Victorian Police have amended their protocols to make it clearer as to when a farmer can pass a roadblock during an emergency. Access when the fire is going or controlled would require as a minimum:

- Identification including PIC (Property Identification Number)
- 2 able bodied people (1 driver, 1 observer)
- Personal Protective Equipment and Clothing
- 2 forms of communication (mobile & UHF/Satellite phone)
- Adequate water and pump
- Chains for dragging debris
- Chainsaw for tree removal
- First Aid Kit
- Lighting

The roadblock staff would still require authorisation from the incident controller or a supervisor to allow a farmer to pass if the fire is going. Police have the authority to stop people from travelling through a roadblock regardless of the circumstances. Farmers need to plan ahead and be aware that they may not be able to access their property because risks are too great.

## Assessing Livestock

After an emergency, DEPI Animal Health teams rely on the confidential PIC database to provide animal health and welfare assistance to property owners in affected areas if their livestock are injured. To ensure emergency teams have the most relevant information, property owners should update their PIC details each season. This should include any agistment blocks and current contact details.

Upon initial assessment of livestock on a fire affected property, animals can be categorised into four groups:

### Destroy immediately

- Animals that are able to walk must be yarded to allow thorough assessment.
- Animals suffering significant burns to more than 15% of their body will be humanely destroyed.
- Animals that are unconscious, semi-conscious, having difficulty breathing and seeing or suffering major swelling to the limbs or hooves coming away from the leg will be categorised for destruction.

### Salvage slaughter

- If practical, slaughter through an abattoir or knackery may be an option for livestock with minor burns which are not destroyed in the initial assessment.
- These animals MUST be fit to load and for transport.
- This may not be practical with large numbers of affected livestock and over-supplied abattoirs.

### Keep and nurse

- Those animals that have minor burns (less than 15% of their body).
- These animals can generally recover with adequate time, treatment and readily available feed and water. Treatment for the prevention of secondary infections is usually required.
- These animals will need to be inspected daily with any animals deteriorating to be humanely destroyed.

### No apparent damage

- These animals have zero to minimal burns e.g. singed wool or hair.
- These animals often require no further action.

Farmers are often the first response and are responsible for making immediate decisions in the best interest of animal welfare and for arranging humane destruction of animals. DEPI will assist in the humane destruction or salvage slaughter of animals if responsible persons are unable to undertake associated tasks.

## Livestock Insurance

VFF's key insurance partner WFI, encourages their clients to take action to ensure that animals that are injured or suffering are dealt with humanely, including their immediate destruction if this is deemed necessary. For claims purposes, where possible, property owners should take photographs of the condition of the livestock. Following the event, property owners will need to make clear records detailing the number of livestock affected and disposal details so that the loss adjuster appointed by WFI can verify this information upon arrival. Further, WFI does not require ear tags or NLIS buttons in the case of livestock destroyed in the fire or as a result of the humane steps taken. A stock inventory may however be requested during the course of the claim.

## Key Contacts

Victorian Bushfire Information Line: 1800 240 667  
DEPI Animal Welfare: 136 186  
WFI: 1300 934 934  
CFA Victoria website: [www.cfa.org.au](http://www.cfa.org.au)  
VFF Fire Awareness Resources website: [www.vff.org.au](http://www.vff.org.au)

