

# BUSHFIRES AND YOUR PETS

## A quick guide for pet owners

**CFA encourages all people who live near bush, grassland or coastal areas to develop a Bushfire Survival Plan. For pet owners, this includes planning for the safety and survival of your pets. Whether pets are at home with you, or brought along on holidays, you will need to plan and prepare for their safety.**

### Prepare a Bushfire Survival Plan for your pets

- Make sure your pets are identified with a collar identification tag and/or a microchip
- Include a second or emergency contact on your pet's microchip and identification tag registration. It is critical that this information is current and that the nominated person lives outside your district, perhaps in an area which is not bushfire-prone
- Make sure all contact information corresponding to your pet's council and microchip/tag registration is current. Contact your council to update pet registration details and contact your microchip register to update your pet's microchip contact information. You can find out which microchip register your pet is registered with by checking your microchip registration certificate or you can call the National Pet Register for assistance on 1300 734 738
- Practise how you will relocate your pets should you decide to leave early
- 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 decide to keep them with you
- Discuss with neighbours how your pets will be protected in case you are not at home/cannot make it home during a bushfire threat. Keep in regular contact with your neighbours during the bushfire season to advise them of your movements
- If you take your pets on holiday into a bushfire-prone area, make sure you prepare for their safety, along with yours, in the event of a fire
- Have a bushfire relocation kit (see below) prepared and stored for your pets within easy reach so you are ready to leave early.

### Prepare a Pet Bushfire Relocation Kit

Your Pet Bushfire Relocation Kit 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 typed list of them
- your pet's medical history including proof of vaccination
- your vet's contact details.



### Personal safety during bushfires

**It is important to put your own safety before the safety of your pets.** Many deaths during bushfires occur when people are caught out in the open and exposed to radiant heat from the fire. If you cannot locate or contain your pets, it is important to seek shelter for yourself before it is too late. Radiant heat can kill, but cannot penetrate through solid objects, so it is critical to shield yourself by:

- Seeking shelter inside a building – preferably a well-prepared house
- Wearing appropriate personal protective clothing made of natural fibres like long-sleeved overalls or a long-sleeved shirt and trousers made of cotton. Synthetic materials should not be worn.

For more information on personal bushfire safety and to prepare your bushfire plan, visit the CFA website at [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au) or call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667 to order your Fire Ready Kit.

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### What to do in an emergency

- Relocate your pets early. Having your pets relocated to a safer area will mean one less thing to worry about if you choose to stay and defend your home. If you plan to relocate your pets, remember you will need to move them well in advance of fire threatening your property. If you do not have friends or family outside the area who can care for your pet, consider placing your pets in a boarding facility
- If you stay to defend your home and you choose to keep your pets with you, it's important to confine your pets 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
- If you relocate with your pets, make sure they are secured with a collar and lead or confined in a carrier for cats and smaller pets. Make sure the carriers are clearly labelled with your contact details.

### Pet Identification

It is important that your pets are microchipped and wearing a collar identification tag at all times. Identification needs to be current and all contact information must be kept up to date. If you live in a bushfire-prone area, it is important to have a second/emergency contact linked to your pet's record that is outside the area. The National Pet Register provides free identification for cats and dogs. Visit [www.petregister.com.au](http://www.petregister.com.au) or call 1300 734 738. The National Pet Register pet recovery service is staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

### After the fire

If your pets have suffered burn injuries during a fire, they must receive immediate veterinary treatment. As soon as possible, take your pets to the nearest veterinary clinic or animal shelter.

### Caring for your pet in 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 on forecast days of Severe, Extreme or Code Red (catastrophic) fire danger, it is important that you keep your pets as cool as possible. Keeping a pet comfortable on a hot day is your responsibility. Look for the warning signs.

Signs that an animal is suffering heat stress are: excessive panting, salivating and pets may also 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 veterinarian's contact details available. Confirm their availability after hours and on weekends.

### 10 tips for keeping your pets cool on hot days

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



#### Further information

- Animal Welfare - Department of Primary Industries [www.dpi.vic.gov.au](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au)
- Free pet identification- National Pet Register [www.petregister.com.au](http://www.petregister.com.au) or 1300 734 738
- Bushfire safety and property preparation  
CFA website [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)  
Victorian Bushfire Information Line 1800 240 667.



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