



NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR ANIMALS IN EMERGENCIES

NATIONAL PLANNING PRINCIPLES FOR ANIMALS IN DISASTERS



FOREWORD

In Australia, natural disasters are inevitable, often unpredictable, and will remain a constant feature of life for communities and animals.

Over a 30-year period our nation has endured around 265 disasters including droughts, floods, storms, tropical cyclones and fires¹.

In 2011, the Council of Australian Governments endorsed the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience. The Strategy is the first step in a long term, evolving process to deliver sustained behavioural change and enduring partnerships. Importantly, the Strategy focuses on the shared responsibility of governments, business and communities in preparing for, and responding to disasters.

A feature of the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience is the recognition that the benefits of improved disaster planning extend beyond protection of human life and property to the broader social environment.

Animals are part of our lives and in addition to minimising their suffering, there are compelling reasons to fully integrate animals into disaster management:

- More than half of the Australian public own pets². Previous disasters have shown that animals must be accounted for in order to ensure human safety. The Royal Commission into the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria found that people returned to the fire zone to attempt rescue of their animals. The Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry found that pet owners were reluctant to evacuate without their animals.
- The community has a strong interest in the fate of wildlife in disasters. After being rescued from the fire ground following the Victorian fires, more than 1.3 million people watched the video of Sam the Koala being cared for. The Victorian Association of Forest Industries estimates that millions of native animals and birds were killed during the 2009 Victorian fires, either in the event itself or from starvation or predation following the event³. Integration of wildlife into disaster management planning (including threatened species) would enhance community and environmental recovery post-disaster.
- The direct cost of livestock losses in the Black Saturday fires is conservatively estimated at more than \$18 million⁴. In addition to direct economic losses, the psychosocial wellbeing of individuals and entire farming communities is severely undermined by the loss of animals and livelihoods.

Recent disasters have propelled many jurisdictions to progress towards full integration of animals into disaster planning arrangements. The Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Plan is a prime example of how this can be achieved.

The National Advisory Committee for Animals in Emergencies is an interim committee established following the 2012 *Building Resilience: Animals and Communities Coping in Emergencies* workshop. The committee is taking a collaborative and proactive approach to the integration of animals into disaster management planning across all jurisdictions and communities. The National Planning Principles for Animals in Disasters build on best practice and are designed to be a non-prescriptive tool to support jurisdictions as they seek to improve disaster management planning by ensuring that animals are considered.

¹ Gentle, N, Kierce, S & Nitz, A, *Economic costs of natural disasters in Australia*, Bureau of Transport Economics, Department of Transport and Regional Services, 2001.

² Headey, B, *National People and Pets Survey / Socially Responsible Pet Ownership in Australia: A Decade of Progress*, University of Melbourne, 2006.

³ 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission *Final Report* Volume II para 8.12.3, 2010

⁴ Coll, E, *The Case for Preparedness: Quantification of Production Losses due to Livestock Deaths from Disasters in Australia*, Prepared for the World Society for the Protection of Animals, 2013.

We commend the National Planning Principles for Animals in Disasters to all jurisdictions and all stakeholders, and trust that they will be a useful tool to enhance Australia's resilience to disasters.

Mr Phillip Glyde

Chair, Animal Welfare Committee

Dr Gardner Murray AO, PSM

Chair, Australian Animal Welfare Advisory Committee

BACKGROUND

In October 2012, World Society for the Protection of Animals and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australian Animal Welfare Strategy co-hosted a workshop entitled, *Building Resilience: Animals and Communities Coping in Emergencies*.

The workshop drew together over 50 stakeholders from a wide range of backgrounds including emergency managers; humanitarian organisations; Australian local, state and federal government departments; New Zealand government departments; veterinarians; researchers and animal organisations.

It was acknowledged that the Australian public increasingly expects that emergency management arrangements will include animals and that failure to integrate animals into planning results in unacceptable economic and social costs, including loss of human life.

Workshop delegates resolved to improve outcomes for animals in disasters by seeking integration of animals into emergency management at each stage of the disaster cycle⁵.

Delegates also agreed that one of the primary ways to achieve this objective would be the establishment of a national advisory committee for animals in emergencies⁶ to provide leadership, insight and advice to organisations attempting to integrate animals into emergency management systems.

The National Advisory Committee for Animals in Emergencies was established as an interim committee following the workshop and met for the first time in February 2013. At this meeting, members acknowledged the progress being made towards integration of animals into emergency management planning and agreed that the development of overarching principles would help jurisdictions to create emergency plans customised to their particular circumstances.

THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR ANIMALS IN EMERGENCIES

The National Advisory Committee for Animals in Emergencies includes members from industry; humanitarian and animal welfare organisations; federal, state and local governments with responsibility for animal welfare; the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department; and the veterinary community.

As the committee promotes an 'all-hazards' humane approach to all species in emergencies, the committee membership was selected to ensure the inclusion of expertise in livestock, companion animals and wildlife.

The interim committee was established in 2013 with the vision that: "animal welfare is accepted as core to emergency management and there are improved outcomes for animals in emergencies".

The mission of the committee is: "to work collaboratively to incorporate animals into emergency management planning at all levels of government, and to encourage those responsible for animals in emergencies to accept their responsibilities".

⁵ The disaster cycle includes preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation.

⁶ World Society for the Protection of Animals and Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australian Animal Welfare Strategy, *Building Resilience: Animals and Communities Coping in Emergencies Workshop Report*, October 2012.

The committee is accountable to the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy Advisory Committee and the Animal Welfare Committee.

A list of committee members is included in Appendix A.

PURPOSE

Australia has a world class emergency management system that covers all parts of the disaster cycle and outlines clear control and coordination arrangements that allow for effective mobilisation of resources across the three levels of government.

The extent to which animals are integrated into these arrangements varies significantly across states, territories and local government areas.

The community has an expectation that emergency management arrangements will allow for a coordinated approach to the management of animal welfare impacts to companion animals, livestock and wildlife.

Following a process of assessing the status of animals in emergency management planning across Australian jurisdictions, numerous examples of best practice have been identified and used to develop these overarching national planning principles.

The purpose of the national planning principles for animals in disasters is to provide a non-prescriptive tool to help jurisdictions customise plans to meet their particular circumstances.

While there is no 'one size fits all' approach, there is some merit in state and territory plans for animals in disasters being sufficiently aligned to share common characteristics and approaches, particularly to enable the jurisdictions to work together in emergencies that extend across borders.

These principles are minimum expectations of the community for animal welfare outcomes in disasters.

This document is separate to animal welfare arrangements for animal disease and biosecurity emergencies, such as AUSVETPLAN or plans relating to cetacean entanglements or strandings, and marine pollution.

RATIONALE

1) Disaster resilience

Australia is prone to disasters. Over the period from 1967-1999 Australia endured 265 natural disasters with an average annual cost of \$1.14 billion⁷. These disasters included floods, storms, bushfires and tropical cyclones. The Climate Commission⁸ and the Australian National Strategy for Disaster Resilience recognise that climate change is likely to increase the frequency and severity of natural disasters.

While natural disasters are the most common form of disaster in Australia, the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience states that disasters can also involve any “serious disruption to community life which threatens or causes death or injury in that community and/or damage to property which is beyond the day-to-day capacity of the prescribed statutory authorities and which requires special mobilisation and organisation of resources other than those normally available to those authorities”⁹.

This definition encompasses a number of scenarios with animal welfare implications in addition to natural disasters including, for example, a bankrupt primary producer walking off the farm and leaving livestock without access to food and shelter.

The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience states that “a national, coordinated and cooperative effort is required to enhance Australia’s capacity to withstand and recover from emergencies and disasters”.

The National Planning Principles for Animals in Disasters recognise that animals are part of our lives. In order to build resilience, animals must be integrated into disaster planning.

In line with the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, this document recognises that the safety and welfare of people is the overarching priority at all times.

While the responsibility for the welfare of animals at all times remains with the person in charge of the animal, the National Planning Principles for Animals in Disasters recognise that government can play a supporting role in helping people exercise their responsibility for the animals in their care, improving overall resilience. Thus, incorporating animals into emergency management planning is an important role for government and will bring about enhanced disaster resilience in the community.

2) Why animals matter in disaster planning

a) Animals have intrinsic value

As sentient beings, animals suffer in disasters from injury, pain, hunger, thirst, fear and distress. The World Organisation for Animal Health defines animal welfare in the following way:

“Animal welfare means how an animal is coping with the conditions in which it lives. An animal is in a good state of welfare if (as indicated by scientific evidence) it is healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, able to express innate behaviour, and if it is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear and distress”.

⁷ Gentle, N, Kierce, S & Nitz, A, *Economic costs of natural disasters in Australia*, Bureau of Transport Economics, Department of Transport and Regional Services, 2001.

⁸ Climate Commission, *The Critical Decade – Extreme Weather*, 2013.

⁹ National Emergency Management Committee, *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience / Building our Nation’s Resilience to Disasters*, 2011.

On the basis of animal welfare principles alone, efforts should be made to protect animals from disasters.

b) *Animals contribute to human health and wellbeing*

The link between human wellbeing and interaction with animals is well documented. A survey of New Zealand residents found that almost two-thirds believe their relationship with their pet is vital to their psychosocial wellbeing¹⁰.

Following Cyclone Tracey, animals were flown out of Darwin while the infrastructure was repaired. Residents reported that the return of their animals was critical to their recovery following the disaster¹¹.

c) *Animals have economic value*

Whilst there is no comprehensive database of the livestock losses incurred in disasters, available data suggests that the direct costs of livestock losses are considerable. For example, the 1983 Ash Wednesday fires resulted in an estimated total gross output loss of more than \$65 million¹². A decrease in production in the agriculture sector also results in downstream production losses for agriculture-dependent industries. These downstream impacts have been estimated to result in a total economic loss some 2.4 times greater than that experienced by the agricultural industry alone¹³.

d) *Failure to account for animals puts human life at risk*

The Royal Commission into the Black Saturday fires found that individuals perished as a result of failing to evacuate with their animals and prematurely returning to the fire ground in order to save their animals.

3) Benefits of integrating animals into disaster planning

Livestock losses in a selection of ten disasters in Australia between 1967 and 2011 are conservatively estimated at approximately 1.6 million animals¹⁴. Improving disaster preparedness is likely to significantly reduce animal casualties resulting in improved animal welfare outcomes.

In addition to the avoidance of economic losses associated with livestock losses in disasters, interviews with survivors of a South Australian fire found that the loss of livestock represented a "severing of a link between the family and its farming history"¹⁵. This underlies the risks to community resilience from failure to integrate animals into planning.

¹⁰ Glassey, S, *Recommendations to Enhance Companion Animal Emergency Management in New Zealand*, Mercalli Disaster Management Consulting, 2010.

¹¹ Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources South Australia, *South Australian Management Plan for Companion Animals and Wildlife in Emergency Evacuations*, July 2012.

¹² Coll, E, *The Case for Preparedness: Quantification of Production Losses due to Livestock Deaths from Disasters in Australia*, Prepared for the World Society for the Protection of Animals, 2013.

¹³ Statistics New Zealand in Coll, E, *The Case for Preparedness: Quantification of Production Losses due to Livestock Deaths from Disasters in Australia*, Prepared for the World Society for the Protection of Animals, 2013.

¹⁴ Coll, E, *The Case for Preparedness: Quantification of Production Losses due to Livestock Deaths from Disasters in Australia*, Prepared for the World Society for the Protection of Animals, 2013.

¹⁵ Background briefings on emerging issues for fire managers from AFAC and Bushfire CRC, *Fire Note / Exploring the Bushfire Experience from a Domestic Perspective*, Issue 40, October 2009.

The loss of pets in Hurricane Katrina in the United States of America was found to be a greater contributing factor in human psychopathology than the loss of homes¹⁶. This suggests that failing to recognise the interdependency relationship between humans and animals can result in significant human welfare impacts.

Of the witness testimonies provided to the Royal Commission into the Black Saturday Victorian bushfires, over one-third included reference to animals. Testimony included references to residents who died when they attempted evacuation with animals. Following the Royal Commission's recommendation that animals be integrated into emergency management planning in order to promote human safety, the Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Plan was developed.

NATIONAL PLANNING PRINCIPLES FOR ANIMALS IN DISASTERS

The National Planning Principles for Animals in Disasters describe both the planning process and considerations to include in a disaster management plan. The planning process itself is an opportunity to build support for the integration of animals in emergency response plans; to increase understanding of how plans might work in practice; and to develop the networks that will allow for effective implementation of plans.

The second section of the National Planning Principles for Animals in Disasters provides an easy to use tool for jurisdictions when writing or reviewing plans. These guidelines are sufficiently high-level to allow for jurisdictional customisation.

1) The planning process for animals in disasters

The planning process should:

- explicitly recognise that integrating animals into emergency management plans will improve animal welfare outcomes
- explicitly recognise that integration of animals into emergency management plans will help secure improved human welfare and safety during disasters
- aim to clearly identify roles and responsibilities within command and control structures in sufficient detail to allow for effective implementation of animal welfare measures
- recognise the wide range of parties involved in animal welfare at each stage of the disaster cycle and ensure these organisations are consulted during writing or reviewing disaster plans
- respect the role of local government as 'first responders' in disasters and acknowledge local government expertise in understanding local needs and resource availability, especially with reference to animal welfare and animal management arrangements within the local area
- consider how best to ensure effective integration and implementation of the plan by, for example, extensive consultation during the planning process or inclusion of an animal welfare element in requirements for disaster training exercises
- include effective communication about plan implementation with those parties who may be involved as well as those who may be impacted by disasters

¹⁶ Hunt, M, Bogue, K & Rohrbaugh, N, Pet Ownership and Evacuation Prior to Hurricane Irene, *Animals* 2012, 2, 529-539.

- be communicated in language that is accessible to all stakeholders including the general public.

2) **The disaster plan**

The plan should:

- make reference to, and situate the plan within, the local area and/or jurisdictional regulatory and legal frameworks
- take an 'all hazards' humane approach to all species and encompass a wide range of possible disaster-type situations that may impact upon the welfare of livestock, companion animals, wildlife and other categories of animals such as laboratory animals
- use a definition of disaster that aligns with the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience
- include a statement of scope that excludes animal disease and biosecurity emergencies from the plan
- emphasise that biosecurity requirements are of utmost importance in disasters and that quarantine and biosecurity protocols must be followed wherever practicable
- appropriately plan for animals taking into consideration the types of disasters most likely to be experienced in the particular jurisdiction
- provide for a staggered scaling up of response and resources in line with the scale and severity of disasters and their impact on animal and human welfare
- include a vision statement that makes reference to the importance of securing animal welfare outcomes in disasters
- include a brief rationale statement that includes reference to the benefits of the plan for animal welfare, human safety and wellbeing, and for the economy
- include consideration of animals at all stages of the disaster cycle including preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation
- outline command and control structures in language that is accessible to the general public
- specify that the individual in charge of an animal is ultimately responsible for its welfare in disasters
- outline the processes for interagency co-operation at all stages of the disaster cycle
- include a system for formalising arrangements with animal welfare support organisations
- take into consideration logistical challenges that may impact upon implementation of the plan during disasters, for example, in the event that key infrastructure or personnel are not able to be deployed, communication is affected or shelters are destroyed or otherwise unavailable
- include arrangements for regular testing of the animal welfare in disasters plan

- include requirements and arrangements for regular testing and review of the animal welfare in disasters plan.

CONCLUSION

It is intended that the National Planning Principles for Animals in Disasters will be a useful tool to support jurisdictions as they seek to improve disaster management planning by ensuring that animals are considered. By integrating animals into disaster planning and arrangements in Australia, communities and governments are working together to enhance disaster resilience.

In order to make the principles widely available to the jurisdictions, the interim National Advisory Committee for Animals in Emergencies intends to forward this document to the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy Advisory Committee and Animal Welfare Committee for their endorsement. Ultimately, adoption of the principles by the emergency management community will lead to improved outcomes for animals in emergencies.

APPENDIX A – INTERIM NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR ANIMALS IN EMERGENCIES

Dr Gardner Murray (Independent Chair)	Australian Animal Welfare Advisory Committee
Dr Peter Thornber	Australian Animal Welfare Strategy – Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Dr Hugh Wirth	Australian Animal Welfare Strategy – Companion Animals Working Group; World Society for the Protection of Animals
Mr Kevin Shiell	Australian Animal Welfare Strategy – Livestock and Production Working Group
Dr Ben Gardiner	Australian Veterinary Association
Ms Carolyn Parsons	Australian Red Cross
Ms Catherine Bryant	Attorney-General's Department – Emergency Management
Ms Jacqui Mills (Member and Secretariat)	World Society for the Protection of Animals
Dr Deb Kelly	Department of Environment , Water and Natural Resource, South Australia - Wildlife
Ms Cathy Pawsey	Department of Primary Industries, Victoria – Southern Jurisdictions
Mr Peter Phillips	Department of Local Government, Northern Territory – Northern Jurisdictions
Mr John Madigan	Gold Coast City Council – Local Government
Mr Greg Eustace	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Queensland