

PHHWV is a non-profit, charitable organisation committed to providing hope for Victorian equines through education, rehabilitation and advocacy.

Press Release

Victorian Bushfires Effects on Horses

The current Victorian fires are having a devastating effect on people's lives and the full extent of property loss and damages will only become apparent when residents are allowed to return to their homes after the effected areas are declared safe.

Many people have had to flee with very little notice and no choice but to leave their horses behind. The loss of life is huge and the loss of equine life will be equally as great as most of the areas affected have high equestrian populations. The majority of residents have multiple horses and many may be left with nothing. A vast amount of property infrastructure has been destroyed; horse floats and trucks included, and owners are without feed with recently stocked hay sheds being burnt down. On top of all this owners may not have the means to pay the veterinary bills for injured animals if they are lucky enough to get a veterinary to visit promptly.

In response to this emergency PHHWV recommends that you ensure your own safety when returning to your property and then consider the welfare of your horses. It is also important to make sure your horse is safe and can't get out on the road or into neighboring properties. Beware of power lines that may be lying on the ground and trees that may be partially fallen.

Common injuries that horses will sustain as a result of fire are burns to flesh and hooves, cuts and abrasions, smoke inhalation and stress colic. With much of the infrastructure being destroyed and many horses sustaining injuries this may mean having to relocate your horse for treatment and safety, especially if there is no clean water available.

If you have to move your horse, where possible:

- 🐾 try and check with local authorities to be sure they agree it is safe to travel with your horse;
- 🐾 try and check with local authorities regarding any areas that may have been designated as animal evacuation areas i.e. some areas use local showground's or race courses where veterinary treatment may be available;
- 🐾 try and have a location already organised rather than heading out without a place. This will prevent you from traveling into another fire or road block and will ensure the area you choose is well away from the fires and the threat of fires;
- 🐾 make sure your horse is fit enough to travel and if any injuries are severe or the horse is too weak to be moved you may need to be considered euthanasia.

If you find a horse wandering after a fire please inform the authorities as frightened horses can cause major road accidents particularly in poor visibility. If you are experienced with horses and have an appropriate halter and lead you may try to approach the wandering horse, however if it is not willing to be caught don't chase it as you could cause it to run into the path of oncoming traffic.

Horses are herd animals and will tend to stick together. Once the fire front has passed they are pretty good at looking after themselves if they have managed to survive. If you do manage to catch a horse please ensure you contain it in a suitable yard or paddock. Don't simply open a gate and put the horse in a paddock without checking all fencing is in tacked. As part of the state government emergency response services Animal Health Staff will be in the field and will be able to assist with wandering and injured livestock of all kinds.

If owners require more advice or assistance please call PHHWV 1300 881 606 or visit our web site www.phhvw.org.au/emergency.html

Melbourne and Statewide
GPO Box 1991 Melbourne 3001
Information 1300 881 606
www.phhwv.org.au



PHHWV is a non-profit, charitable organisation committed to providing hope for Victorian equines through education, rehabilitation and advocacy.

Good resources for more information are:

CFA – www.cfa.vic.gov.au – the incidents summary page will have updates of the situation in your area.
DPI – www.dpi.vic.gov.au – DPI Ag Note Horses and Bushfires (AG0858)

For Veterinary assistance:

University of Melbourne Veterinary Clinic
Princess Highway Werribee
03 9731 2268
www.equinecentre.unimelb.edu.au
(Note horses will need to be transported for treatment)