

# Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Plan

November 2024





## State Emergency Animal Welfare Contacts

### Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action

[www.agriculture.vic.gov.au](http://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au)

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# Definitions

<b>Agency</b>	Agencies include government and non-government organisations, government departments, council and volunteer organisations with a role in emergency management
<b>Animal</b>	Refers to the definition in Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 which basically includes any live member of a vertebrate species (other than human) and some crustaceans.
<b>Animal welfare</b>	<p>The physical and mental state of an animal in relation to the conditions in which it lives and dies.</p> <p>An animal experiences good welfare if the animal is healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear and distress, and is able to express behaviours that are important for its physical and mental state.</p> <p>Good animal welfare requires disease prevention and appropriate veterinary care, shelter, management and nutrition, a stimulating and safe environment, humane handling and humane slaughter or killing. While animal welfare refers to the state of the animal, the treatment that an animal receives is covered by other terms such as animal care, animal husbandry, and humane treatment.</p>
<b>Animal Welfare Commander</b>	A role within DEECA (Agriculture Victoria) to lead the agency's emergency animal welfare support services for livestock and companion animals at the state, regional and/or incident level.
<b>Biosecurity</b>	Biosecurity is defined as the collective effort to prevent and manage the harms caused by plant and animal pests and diseases, and the impact they have on what we value most: our farms and parks, our pets and gardens, our native plants and animals, the cultural integrity of the landscape, the safety of our food, and the success of our industries.
<b>Command</b>	Command is the direction of response activities internally within an agency to use its people, resources, governance, systems and processes to discharge its responsibilities in line with relevant legislation.
<b>Communication</b>	The engagement and provision of information across agencies and proactively with the community to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies.
<b>Community Connection</b>	The understanding of and connecting with trusted networks, trusted leaders and all communities to support resilience and decision making.
<b>Companion Animal</b>	Any non-human vertebrate animal kept for the purpose of companionship, recreation, protection, or work.
<b>Consequence</b>	The management of the effect of emergencies on individuals, the community, infrastructure, and the environment.
<b>Control</b>	Control is the direction of response activities across agencies, horizontally, including the coordination and tasking of other agencies.
<b>Control agency</b>	The agency responsible for leading the response to a particular type of emergency.
<b>Coordination</b>	<p>Coordination is the bringing together of people, resources, governance, systems, and processes, to ensure effective response to and relief and recovery from an emergency. Coordination operates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• vertically within an agency as a function of command.</li> <li>• horizontally across agencies as a function of the authority to control.</li> </ul>
<b>Domestic Animal Businesses</b>	Licensed premises under the Domestic Animals Act 1994 including pet shops, dog/cat breeding and boarding establishments and dog training establishments.
<b>Emergency</b>	An emergency due to the actual or imminent occurrence of an event which in any way endangers or threatens to endanger the safety or health of any person in Victoria or which destroys or damages, or threatens to destroy or damage, any property in Victoria, or endangers or threatens to endanger the environment or an element of the environment in Victoria.
<b>Emergency Management Team</b>	A team which assists a controller in formulating a response strategy and in its execution by all agencies, and which assists the Emergency Response Coordinator in determining resource acquisition needs and in ensuring coordinated response to an emergency.

<b>Emergency Relief</b>	Relief is the provision of assistance to meet the essential needs of individuals, families, and communities during and in the immediate aftermath of an emergency.
<b>Emergency Relief Centre</b>	Emergency Relief Centres provide immediate and basic services to people affected by an emergency.
<b>Emergency Response Coordinator</b>	A person appointed as state, regional, municipal, or incident emergency response coordinator, whose role is to coordinate the response to an emergency.
<b>Evacuation</b>	The planned relocation of persons from dangerous or potentially dangerous areas to safer areas and eventual return.
<b>Fodder</b>	Feed for livestock such as hay or pre-prepared feedstuffs designed specifically for livestock.
<b>Livestock</b>	Any animal kept for the purposes of primary production, including cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry, ratites, buffalo, camels, alpacas, goats, deer, or horses, including where used for recreation.
<b>Local Government Emergencies</b>	Local Government Emergencies (LGE) is the specialist branch within the Department of Government Services (DGS) which concentrates on the emergency management responsibilities of councils. DGS is the Lead Response Support Agency (RSA) for the functional area of Local Government in the SEMP.
<b>Managed animal</b>	Any animal including wildlife and exotics that is owned or possessed or is under a person's care, control, or supervision.
<b>Organisation</b>	Any non-government or not for profit entity, company, or authority.
<b>Person in charge of animals</b>	A person who is the owner or has the animal in their possession or custody, or under the person's care, control or supervision and any employee or agent of the owner of the animal.
<b>State Duty Officer Wildlife Emergencies</b>	A role established by DEECA for the provision of high-level technical information on wildlife emergencies to, State Agency Commander, Class 2 State Controller (where appointed), Regional Agency Commanders and Incident Controllers during wildlife emergencies.
<b>Recovery</b>	The assisting of persons and communities affected by emergencies to achieve a proper and effective level of functioning.
<b>Salvage slaughter</b>	The processing of animals through an abattoir. Livestock impacted by an emergency, suitable for salvage slaughter are those that do not show signs of distress or disablement and are fit enough to be transported.
<b>State Agency Commander</b>	A role established within state government departments including DEECA to coordinate its emergency response arrangements across the organisation at a state level.
<b>Support agency</b>	An agency which provides services, personnel, or material to support or assist a control agency or affected persons.
<b>Triage</b>	The process of determining the priority of veterinary treatment based on the severity of an animal's condition. This rations veterinary treatment efficiently when resources are insufficient for all animals to be treated immediately.
<b>Triage Site</b>	A site where animals are assessed, and their treatment needs (including euthanasia) are determined. Sites may include capacity for provision of first aid but will not include facilities for ongoing treatment.
<b>Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Committee</b>	A consultative forum chaired by DEECA that provides ongoing leadership and oversight in the development and review of plans and policies relating to emergency animal welfare management in Victoria. During emergencies, the committee has an operational role to share intelligence and, where appropriate, provide and share resources to address animal welfare impacts during the emergency.
<b>Wildlife</b>	Any vertebrate animal indigenous to Australia, some non-indigenous vertebrates (deer and game birds declared to be wildlife under the <i>Wildlife Act, 1975</i> ), any terrestrial invertebrates listed as threatened under the <i>Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act, 1988</i> and does not include fish within the meaning of the <i>Fisheries Act, 1995</i> .

# Acronyms

AVA	Australian Veterinary Association (Victorian Division)	MRM	Municipal Recovery Manager
AWC	Animal Welfare Commander	NLIS	National Livestock Identification System
CFA	Country Fire Authority	PAS	Pet Animal Shelter
WWCWG	Wildlife Welfare Communications Working Group	POCTA	Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986
DAMP	Domestic Animal Management Plan	POWE	Principal Officer Wildlife Emergencies
DGS	Department of Government Services	PV	Parks Victoria
DH	Department of Health	RAC	Regional Agency Commander
DEECA	Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action.	RAWC	Regional Animal Welfare Commander
DFFH	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.	RSPCA (Victoria)	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Victoria
EMV	Emergency Management Victoria	SAC	State Agency Commander
EMT	Emergency Management Team	SAWC	State Animal Welfare Commander
FFMVic	Forest Fire Management Victoria	SCC	State Control Centre
EPA	Environment Protection Authority	SDO (Wildlife Emergencies)	State Duty Officer Wildlife Emergencies
FRV	Fire Rescue Victoria	SEMP	State Emergency Management Plan
IC	Incident Controller	SERO	State Emergency Response Officer (of Victoria Police)
IMT	Incident Management Team	SES	Victoria State Emergency Service
IMS	Incident Management System	SIGs	Special Interest Groups
LGV	Local Government Victoria	VEAWC	Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Committee
LGE	Local Government Emergencies	VICPOL	Victoria Police
MAV	Municipal Association of Victoria	VFF	Victorian Farmers Federation
MECC	Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre	WESN	Wildlife Emergency Support Network
MEAWP	Municipal Emergency Animal Welfare Plans		
MEMO	Municipal Emergency Management Officer		
MEMP	Municipal Emergency Management Plan		
MERC	Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator		

# Foreword

## Animal welfare is important to the Victorian Government and the Victorian community.

Many types of emergencies in Victoria affect animals and can cause significant suffering. Recent disasters in Australia and overseas have highlighted that the bonds between people and animals strongly influence decision making in times of crisis. The lack of adequate planning for the management of animals and their welfare during emergencies often results in poor, last minute decisions that can have dangerous or fatal consequences for animals and their owners or carers. It is therefore important to provide appropriate information and action to support animal welfare outcomes in preparation to and during an emergency and to have a plan that delivers this intent.

The original Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Plan (the Plan) was established in 2011 following recognition by the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission of the importance of the bonds that people form with animals. They identified the significant impact these bonds can have on people's decision making about if, and when, they would relocate, which ultimately impacts community safety during emergencies. The Commission also noted that improving agency coordination would help to provide more effective relief to all animals regardless of whether they are wildlife, stock, companion animals or pets.

While the responsibility for the welfare of an animal remains with the person or persons in charge of that animal, many different agencies and organisations are available to assist during emergencies in Victoria.

The Plan is a reference for all agencies, organisations, groups, and individuals with responsibility for animal welfare during emergencies. It defines the roles and responsibilities of agencies and organisations and provides principles and policy for use in emergency planning, response, relief and recovery phases.

The Plan was developed following consultation with emergency management and animal welfare stakeholders including the Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Committee (VEAWC). It has been developed in line with the National Planning Principles for Animals in Disasters established by the National Advisory Committee for Animals in Emergencies.

The Plan also reflects various emergency obligations of the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action and of other Victorian agencies and organisations relating to animals (livestock, companion animals and wildlife) as defined within the State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP).





# 1.0 Introduction

## Emergencies and natural disasters can have significant impacts on the welfare of animals and their owners.

Animals play a significant role in both the lives and livelihoods of Victorians. The Victorian Government conducted a statewide pet census in 2022-23. Key findings from the survey include that 58% of adult Victorians owned a pet at the time of the survey and that owners were overwhelmingly positive about their pets with 98% saying they had a positive impact on their lives. Victoria has almost 29,000 farms with over 22 million beef and dairy cattle, sheep and lambs, pigs, poultry goats and other animals (State of Victoria, 2024).

Wildlife is an important part of our environment and essential to the function and health of Victoria's ecosystems. While it is difficult to determine how much wildlife is impacted or at-risk during emergencies, there is a strong community expectation that the Victorian Government will provide leadership in addressing and minimising wildlife welfare issues.

The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) is the designated lead control agency for responding to wildlife welfare arising from a declared emergency event. In some cases, community members may be able to assist during wildlife emergency events. To do so, training and accreditation to become a member of the Wildlife Emergency Support Network (WESN) is required.

The Plan assists to clarify roles, responsibilities, and formal arrangements between the various stakeholders for the delivery of all emergency response, relief, and recovery activities in relation to animal welfare. It also provides a commitment to regular updates and reviews.

As administrator of the Prevention of Cruelty to *Animals Act 1986 (POCTA)*, the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action administers the Plan consistent with its responsibilities as defined by the State Emergency Management Plan, the Prevention

of *Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 (POCTA)*, the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, the *Wildlife Act 1975* and the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*.

This version of the Plan is the outcome of the third (2024) review of the original plan and is based on the collective experience of agencies and organisations identified as having a role in contributing to positive animal welfare outcomes during an emergency. It also takes account of recent changes to Victorian emergency management arrangements, as well as Victorian machinery of government changes.

Response arrangements for wildlife vary significantly to relief needs of livestock and companion animals. To ensure that all animal welfare issues are addressed appropriately, DEECA delivers its activities through separate teams and processes for the different animal management groups:

- Agriculture Victoria delivers livestock and companion animal preparedness, response, and relief activities.
- Biodiversity Division leads the development of wildlife emergencies preparedness including policy, strategy as well as the development of response plans, training, and community engagement. DEECA delivers wildlife emergency response and relief activities, through Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic).

The Plan acknowledges that councils also have a key role in supporting emergency animal welfare activities. Councils are responsible for the coordination and operation of emergency relief centres, and support emergency relief and recovery operations and planning.

The Plan also acknowledges the role that other agencies, non-government organisations and individuals assisting in the management of animal welfare during emergencies.

## 2.0 Purpose and scope

The purpose of this document is to provide the Victorian community, including emergency services and the animal management sector, with a plan that guides the integration of arrangements for animal welfare with the State's formal emergency management arrangements to ensure that animal welfare is appropriately addressed in preparation for and response to any emergency.

The Plan contributes to enhanced human safety through effective planning and management of animals in emergencies and ensures that animals are considered and protected from suffering during emergencies.

The scope of the Plan encompasses all hazards excluding emergency animal disease (EAD) responses. EAD responses will be managed as part of a national response under the Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan (AUSVETPLAN). The implementation of the Plan is not subject to the national arrangements associated with AUSVETPLAN.

The Plan does not replace specific agency operational emergency management plans, rather it guides the overarching coordination between agencies providing response, relief and recovery services as identified in the SEMP.

To achieve this, the Plan focusses on the efficient and effective management of animals, and coordination of animal welfare support services before, during and after an emergency event and describes:

- The planning arrangements for animal welfare support services in emergency preparedness, response, relief, and recovery.
- The roles and responsibilities of agencies, organisations, owners, and carers in planning for and providing emergency animal welfare support services; and
- Operating arrangements during an emergency for animal welfare agencies and organisations, emergency service agencies and animal owners and carers.

## 3.0 Guiding principles

In implementing the Plan, the following principles apply:

- Protection and preservation of human life is paramount.
- The responsibility for the welfare of animals always remains with the person in charge of an animal.
- Integrating consideration of animals and their welfare into emergency planning, at all levels, will improve animal welfare outcomes and have a positive impact on human safety and resilience.
- Recognition that the bonds people have with their animals' impact on their decision making and behaviour in an emergency.
- This plan encompasses all hazards as emergencies that impact on animals or require animal management processes to be implemented, excluding EAD response.
- As the capacity and capability of agencies and organisations delivering animal welfare support services will change, an adaptive, flexible, and whole of government approach to arrangements is essential to ensuring the objectives of this Plan are met; and
- Partnerships between government agencies and non-government organisations contribute to a range of animal welfare support services during an emergency

While arrangements described in this Plan are typical, it is recognised that a Control Agency may recommend additional or alternative actions at the incident, regional or state level to meet the needs of the emergency.



## 4.0 Authority and governance

The Plan should be read in conjunction with relevant legislation and plans that may identify further strategies, arrangements and resources that assist planning and delivery of animal welfare support services following an emergency event in Victoria. Relevant documents include but are not limited to:

- *Emergency Management Act, 1986, Emergency Management Act, 2013*
  - State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP)
  - Regional Emergency Management Plans (REMPs)
  - Municipal Emergency Management Plans (MEMPs)
  - Municipal Emergency Animal Welfare Plans
- *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1986 (POCTA)*
  - Underpinning Codes and Standards for the Welfare of Animals
- *Domestic Animals Act, 1994*  
Underpinning Codes of Practice for domestic animal businesses including shelters and pounds
- *Livestock Management Act, 2010*
- *Impounding of Livestock Act, 1994*
- *Wildlife Act, 1975*
- *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act, 1988*
- *Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Act, 2004*

The *Emergency Management Act (1986 and 2013)* is the empowering legislation for the management of emergencies in Victoria.

The *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* is the principal legislation for animal welfare. It establishes legislative powers to prevent cruelty to animals encourage the considerate treatment of animals and improve the level of community awareness about the prevention of cruelty to animals including wildlife.

The Plan is a reference for all agencies, organisations, groups, and individuals with responsibility for animal welfare during emergencies. The Plan is a reference for use in the development of *Municipal Emergency Management Plans (MEMPs)* and *Domestic Animal Management Plans (DAMPs)* and provides guidance to other non-government organisation plans with respect to animal welfare arrangements in Victoria.

DEECA is the custodian of this plan.



## 5.0 Responsibilities of animal owners, managers and carers

The SEMP states that individuals should seek information to make informed decisions on how to prepare for emergencies and should help meet their own relief and recovery needs wherever possible. Information is available from the following websites:

- [Planning for pets in emergencies | Pets and emergencies | Animal Welfare Victoria | Livestock and animals | Agriculture Victoria](#)
- [Horses and livestock in emergencies | Emergency animal welfare | Emergency management | Farm management | Agriculture Victoria](#)
- [Wildlife emergencies](#)

Following an emergency, it is important that individuals and households are as self-sufficient as possible, because in the first instance, agencies will offer emergency support to the most vulnerable community members. It is acknowledged that in the event of an emergency, standards of animal care may be compromised. Those in charge of animals may have to relocate quickly, potentially leaving animals behind, and may be restricted in their ability to care for animals.

**As defined in *POCTA*, the person 'in charge' of an animal has primary responsibility (duty of care) to ensure it is protected from unreasonable pain or suffering.**

An individual or company has a legal obligation to provide for the welfare of animals they own, manage or control. For those in charge of animals, including companion animal owners, livestock owners, wildlife shelter operators and foster carers, zoos, and animal businesses, planning for emergencies is critical. Personal safety plans and household or property plans should include contingencies for animals regardless of whether they will either remain on the property or be relocated during an emergency. Acting early is important so that welfare problems can be avoided or minimised and personnel safety is not compromised.

Planning should include identifying whether animals will be relocated or left on a property, preparing an area for any animals left behind to ensure they are given the best chance of survival, ensuring that animals can be identified and having transport and animals ready so that people can relocate with them in a timely and safe manner. Further advice to assist animal owners integrate the welfare of their animals into their emergency plans is available from the [Agriculture Victoria website](#).

Microchipping and registering animals such as dogs, cats and horses can greatly assist in the identification and tracking of stray or relocated animals during an emergency.

The National Livestock Identification System (NLIS), Australia's system for identifying and tracking beef and dairy cattle, sheep, and goats, can be used in an emergency event to assist in the identification of relocated or stray livestock animals.



# 6.0 Animal welfare support services

Several government agencies and non-government organisations contribute to improved animal welfare outcomes by providing or facilitating a range of animal welfare support services during an emergency.

As the primary agency with animal welfare responsibilities during emergencies, DEECA will establish links with other agencies and organisations with emergency responsibilities, as well as relevant non-government organisations, through the VEAWC to coordinate the management of animal welfare during emergencies.

The Plan defines animal welfare support services as including, but not limited to, the following activities:

- Planning for animal welfare in the event of an emergency;
- Management of displaced animals (including relocated animals);
- Animal welfare assessment, veterinary treatment, humane destruction, salvage slaughter and disposal;
- Provision of emergency pet food, livestock fodder and water; and
- Planning for longer term recovery.

## 6.1 Planning for animal welfare in the event of an emergency

Those agencies and organisations that provide animal welfare support services should prepare for emergencies by:

- Developing and reviewing plans and procedures to address their emergency animal welfare responsibilities;
- Conducting training and exercising to test arrangements in plans and procedures and develop organisational capacity and capability;
- Ensuring contacts are current across government and non-government agencies and organisations;
- Ensuring relationships and agreements with other agencies, groups and organisations are maintained;
- Ensuring community resilience programs contain clear and consistent advice that encourages the community to make informed decisions about their safety and the safety and welfare of the animals under their control; and
- Contributing to relevant committees and forums at the state, regional and local levels.

DEECA will work with other agencies to promote consistency and coordination of animal welfare arrangements within the various tiers of emergency management plans. This includes documentation of appropriate emergency animal welfare arrangements in REMPs, MEMPs and associated emergency animal welfare sub-plans. DEECA participates in both regional and municipal emergency management planning committees.

DEECA's Agriculture Victoria disseminates animal welfare preparedness messaging and communications, including social media, in the lead up to high-risk periods and then emergency specific messaging during an emergency which is incorporated into statewide public information messaging related to the incident.

## The role of the VEAWC in supporting animal welfare

The VEAWC provides a consultative forum to develop, maintain and review the Plan and support its implementation. This includes the activation and operationalisation of the VEAWC in both readiness to high-risk periods for Class 1 emergencies (fire, heat, flood storm) and in response once an emergency commences.

DEECA convenes the Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Committee (VEAWC) including representation from stakeholders who have a lead role in addressing animal welfare needs in an emergency, including DEECA, RSPCA (Victoria), MAV, LGV, AVA and VFF.

In the event of a major emergency with animal welfare impacts, DEECA will chair an online committee meeting to ensure all animal welfare partners have a shared situational awareness and can share intelligence on current or potential issues relating to animal welfare as the emergency evolves. The committee maintains the capability to identify an issue and call on animal welfare partner organisations within the committee to assist and resource a resolution. The committee also utilises the extended networks of the committee membership and key partner organisations to gather emergency related intelligence and share information and situational awareness throughout these extended networks to inform and respond to an emergency event.

## The role of the Wildlife Welfare Communications Working Group

DEECA's Biodiversity Division engages directly with the wildlife welfare sector on wildlife emergency preparedness and response through the Wildlife Welfare Communications Working Group (CWG). Consisting of DEECA and a range of wildlife welfare groups, the CWG will provide evidence-based communication materials before, during and after bushfires and other natural hazards that can impact wildlife welfare, connecting with the audiences of all organisations involved and the wider community.

## 6.2 Management of displaced animals (including relocated animals)

### Managing relocated animals at Emergency Relief Centres

Ensuring arrangements for managed animals are described in evacuation and relocation procedures will improve animal welfare and human safety outcomes. If animals are not included in relocation processes, some people may choose to remain with the animals and risk their lives. Alternatively, people may turn up at relief centres with animals regardless of whether centres are set up to cater for animals or they may independently relocate with animals to locations which may not be safe.

For companion animals under Victoria's emergency management arrangements, councils are responsible for:

- Emergency relief centres
- Emergency confinement of stray animals within the council area
- Referral of animal welfare needs to responsible and animal welfare support organisations
- Assistance with urgent animal welfare needs, including emergency shelter, water, or fodder
- The management of donated goods and services offered to the municipality
- Providing a municipal point of contact for other agencies and organisations (e.g. control agencies, DEECA, RSPCA (Victoria), AVA and VFF), in relation to animal welfare needs or issues
- Make provisions for animals presenting at emergency relief centres for the registration, treatment, and housing of animals at the relief centre or to advise animal owners of alternative arrangements where animals cannot be housed at the site
- Reporting animal welfare needs in accordance with established emergency reporting systems and processes

Responding, where appropriate, to requests for animal welfare resources, in accordance with the State's emergency resource supplementation process

This includes the coordination of the provision and operation of emergency relief centres. This includes coordination of the housing of displaced and lost/stray companion animals, with support from the RSPCA (Victoria). It is important that municipal plans include procedures for managed animals that may present at these sites. However, at all times the person presenting with the animal remains responsible for the animal.

Relief centre arrangements should include provision for the registration, treatment, and short-term housing of animals. Where arrangements cannot be made at the site, animal owners should be advised of the alternative arrangements that are in place. Consideration should be given to:

- Animal admission, identification, and record keeping.
- Secure and functional housing or holding facilities and their proximity to relief centres.
- Feed, water, and shade requirements.
- Access to veterinary treatment for injuries, illness and humane destruction.
- Identification and contacting of owners.
- Animals requiring specialist attention (such as horses and wildlife).
- Animal species and gender separation, including requirements for housing and control of any dog that has been declared dangerous or menacing by council; and
- Staff and community health and safety.

Non-government animal welfare organisations, including RSPCA (Victoria), may have resources to support the management of relocated animals at relief centres and other facilities.

The RSPCA (Victoria) is also responsible for:

- Managing the distribution of donations made to RSPCA (Victoria) to established distribution centres
- Providing advice to pet and horse owners on issues relating to animal welfare

Victoria's standards for animal containment and care are provided for in Codes of Practice, which may not be fully achievable or appropriate in emergency situations. DEECA can provide advice on requirements for relocated animals for control and support agencies in emergency situations. Guidelines for animals at relief centres have been developed and are available on the Agriculture Victoria website.

## Emergency containment of stray animals

During an emergency, stray companion animals or livestock may become a hazard and require emergency containment or impoundment. The *Impounding of Livestock Act 1994* and the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* detail the powers and requirements of landowners or occupiers, and agencies in relation to impounding activities as well as conditions under which animals must be kept ensuring animal welfare needs are met and future welfare problems avoided (e.g., food, water and shelter requirements). Agencies involved in impounding animals may vary depending on the type and location of the animal. However, councils are the appropriate first contact point for reports of stray animals.

## Displaced wildlife

During an emergency, wildlife is often displaced from their usual habitat and may seek shelter in areas that have not been impacted. This is likely to lead to increased wildlife alongside roads, in open paddocks or on public land in or adjacent to towns. Wildlife that does not appear to be injured should not be disturbed as they are likely to be fatigued and stressed. Unnecessary or improper handling can cause further distress or injury to the animal.

If displaced wildlife appears injured as a result of the emergency, they should be reported directly to DEECA for assessment by trained teams deployed to the incident.

## 6.3 Emergency Relief - Agricultural Impact Assessment for Natural Disasters

Agriculture Victoria collects impact assessment data and information to inform decision making for response relief and recovery.

Impact assessments are undertaken to collect loss and damage information from affected landholders. The collection of this data is critical to determine Commonwealth and State Government financial supports to impacted community members and provides an avenue for affected landholders to have their urgent needs referred to an appropriate agency in a timely manner. The identification of consequences to the agricultural sector continues during the impact assessment process.

During an agricultural response to natural disasters, Agriculture Victoria may undertake the following based on scoping activities:

- Report losses and damage to agricultural assets and animals
- Collect impact assessment information through property visits and/or phone calls to affected landholders in the following Victorian planning zones:
  - Farming Zone (FZ)
  - Rural Activity Zone (RAZ)
  - Rural Conservation Zone (RCZ)
  - Green Wedge Zone (GWZ)
  - Green Wedge A Zone (GWAZ).

Prioritise below, subject to any incident specific prioritisations determined by Agriculture Victoria:

- Affected landholders with injured animals
- Affected landholders with commercial primary production enterprises.

During this phase of a natural disaster emergency, Agriculture Victoria will also:

- Liaise closely with other agencies involved in impact assessment and ensure sharing of data and collaborative approaches to data collection where possible
- Refer all urgent personal needs encountered during impact assessment activities within 24 hours to relevant agencies
- Provide agricultural IA summaries to agencies, departments and local government to inform response, relief and recovery needs for the agriculture sector

### Local council support services

- Referral of animal welfare needs to responsible and animal welfare support organisations
- Provide assistance with urgent animal welfare needs, including emergency shelter, water, or fodder
- Ensure animal welfare requests for assistance are referred in accordance with established protocols

### DH/DFH support services

- Ensure animal welfare requests for assistance are referred in accordance with established protocols

### VFF support for Emergency Relief

- Appoint a State Fodder Coordinator to coordinate fodder donations and distribution across affected areas
- Establish local arrangements to service affected areas based on advice from DEECA
- Manage donations of fodder including the transport of fodder to local depots or direct to impacted primary producers
- Provide weekly progress reports on fodder distribution operations to DEECA.





## 6.4 Animal welfare assessment, veterinary treatment, humane destruction, salvage slaughter and disposal

Every effort should be made to minimise the level of pain and suffering of affected animals with the resources available. Critical to this is the timing of assessment, treatment and humane destruction or salvage slaughter activities.

### Animal welfare assessment

DEECA is responsible for assessing the direct impacts of an emergency on animals. This process entails scoping the incident, its impact, and consequences, and then defining appropriate objectives, tactics, and resources to enable an effective response.

If owners or emergency agency personnel become aware of a livestock or companion animal welfare assessment need, contact with Agriculture Victoria will assist a prompt response. On-ground animal welfare assessment activities will only commence once authorisation to enter impacted areas has been given by the control agency. Agriculture Victoria assessment teams will give priority to properties with the largest number of impacted animals and severely impacted animals. These properties will be identified as part of the initial scoping of the incident.

Agriculture Victoria assessment teams comprising officers authorised under *POCTA* will undertake on-ground assessment of impacted livestock and companion animals to assist animal owners to make decisions about the best course of action for their animals.

RSPCA (Victoria) Inspectors and private veterinarians may assist, particularly with the assessment of companion animals and horses. Animals will be assessed based on the need for treatment, immediate humane destruction, or salvage slaughter. Landholders can undertake their own assessment and destruction of stock and may also seek advice from private veterinarians once they can gain safe access to affected animals.

FFMVic will deploy, lead, and manage all field assessment and triage activities for wildlife impacted by an emergency event. This will occur under direction of the relevant Incident Controller and integrated into the Incident Management Team for the emergency. For fire events, these teams may include volunteers, veterinarians and veterinary nurses who have been trained and accredited through the Wildlife Emergency Support Network.

### Treatment

When veterinary treatment of managed animals is required, animal owners and carers will normally be advised to seek veterinary advice from a private veterinarian.

In some parts of the state, veterinary services are limited and the added demand resulting from a major emergency can limit animal owners' access to treatment for their injured animals. In an emergency, DEECA, AVA and councils will determine private veterinarian practices' capacity to meet animal treatment needs and coordinate the development of agreed processes to bridge identified capacity gaps.

Actions to address capacity gaps may include facilitating additional support for local practices and assistance from interstate Veterinarians or directing animal owners and carers to veterinary practices with latent capacity. Actions may also include the establishment of triage sites where animals can be assessed, and their treatment needs (including euthanasia) determined. Depending on the circumstances, triage sites may include capacity for provision of first aid but will generally not include facilities for ongoing treatment.

AVA will work with DEECA and councils to facilitate contact with veterinarians and veterinary nurses wishing to assist in the provision of animal welfare support services in affected areas for livestock and companion animals.

Wildlife that are assessed as being suitable for treatment and rehabilitation by FFMVic wildlife field assessment teams will be captured and taken to a dedicated triage unit (where established) or a private veterinary clinic for veterinary assessment. In field euthanasia will also be undertaken when necessary.

## Humane destruction or salvage slaughter

It is the responsibility of the person in charge of animals to arrange for the humane destruction or salvage slaughter of animals impacted by the emergency, where the animals will continue to suffer if they remain alive, or where the animals have little or no chance of survival. DEECA will assist in the humane destruction or salvage slaughter of animals when the person in charge cannot or will not perform the necessary actions to alleviate the suffering of their animals. DEECA will liaise with the RSPCA (Victoria) and councils to identify opportunities for suitably trained and equipped, *POCTA* authorised officers from these organisations to assist in these activities. Wherever possible, destruction activities will take place in consultation with the person in charge of affected animals. In situations where owners cannot be found, power for immediate destruction in their absence is provided for under *POCTA*.

DEECA is responsible for the humane euthanasia where required of wildlife during and following an emergency. This will be undertaken by wildlife field assessment teams at the incident or by a veterinarian at the triage centre or a nominated private veterinary clinic. While it is prohibited to destroy native wildlife under the *Wildlife Act* without an authorisation, registered veterinary practitioners and appropriately authorised officers may euthanise wildlife in accordance with *POCTA*.

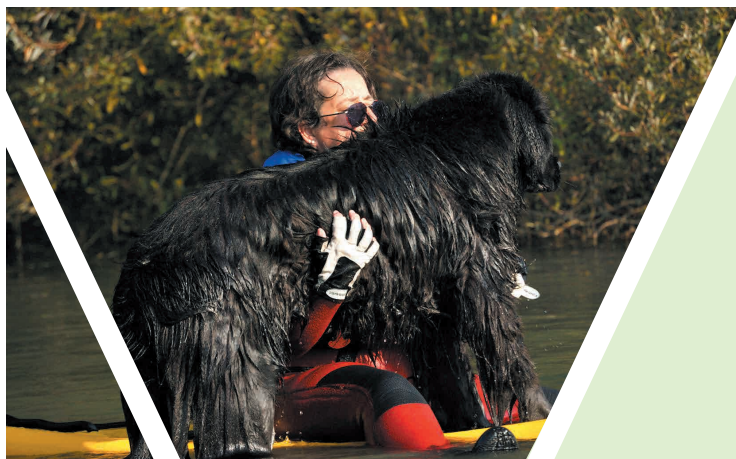
Methods of destruction of animals must be humane, and consistent with national guidelines and DEECA's policies and safe work practices. Guidance on acceptable methods is available in the relevant species codes of practice or standards for welfare which can be found at: <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/animal-welfare-victoria>

## Disposal

The timing of animal carcass disposal is important as delay not only poses a risk to human health and the environment, but also the morale of the animal's owner or carer, emergency personnel and the affected community. It is important approved methods of carcass disposal are used and procedures are followed to minimise inherent risks of disposal, including biosecurity, environmental contamination, or spread of disease.

For livestock, a number of options exist for the disposal of animal carcasses resulting from an emergency, including on-farm burial, licensed landfills, knackeries and rendering facilities. Further information on animal carcass disposal is available at: [Disposing of carcasses after bushfire, flood or drought | What to do after a bushfire | Bushfires | Emergency management | Farm management | Agriculture Victoria](#)

DEECA will liaise with the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and councils to identify suitable sites for disposal and ensure that appropriate disposal methods are adopted. DEECA will also liaise with Museum Victoria on any requirements to retain wildlife specimens of importance for inclusion in the State Collection.



## 6.4 Provision of emergency pet food, livestock fodder and water

Animals require access to fodder and clean drinking water. In emergency situations, allocation of fodder and water will likely be based on meeting the basic needs to ensure animal survival. It is the responsibility of the person in charge of animals to plan for and provide fodder and water for impacted animals.

Emergencies may impact on water quality or supply leading to the need to supply alternative water sources. Emergencies may also impact pastures and other sources of food regularly available to sustain livestock and companion animals. DEECA and the VFF have entered into an agreement that provides for an effective fodder distribution service to assist the Victorian farming community meet emergency fodder needs during a significant emergency. The agreement provides arrangements for DEECA to support the VFF to establish and maintain local fodder depots and manage donations of fodder, including the transport of fodder to these local depots, where it is jointly established that this need exists.

To assist in the early identification of the need to activate the agreement, DEECA will scope the initial phase of an emergency to determine the likely extent of emergency fodder needs prior to conferring with the VFF to determine an appropriate approach to address this need.

The relevant local government council or water authority will establish fodder distribution arrangements and water points. DEECA will work with animal owners and carers to assess emergency fodder and water needs of animals, and direct animal owners and carers to those fodder distribution arrangements and water points.

Animal owners and carers will be encouraged to make their own arrangements for the collection of fodder and water. Where this is not possible, DEECA will liaise with councils and fodder depots to attempt to facilitate the transport of fodder and water to address urgent animal welfare needs.

Longer term fodder and water supplies are the responsibility of the animal owner or carer. In situations where the minimum needs of animals are unlikely to be met, consideration will need to be given to sale, agistment or humane destruction.

Donations of pet food and supplies may also be made in large scale emergencies. DEECA and the RSPCA (Victoria) will liaise with councils to determine suitable local arrangements for impacted pet owners to access donated pet food.

Feeding of wildlife is generally not recommended as it can cause a range of issues for the existing and recovering environment, wildlife, and community members, including:

- Wildlife becoming dependent on people for food and not dispersing away from affected areas or undertaking normal foraging behaviours.
- Dietary deficiencies or harmful foods impacting animal welfare.
- Transferring disease between wildlife.
- Creating weed problems from unsterilised feed
- Attracting predators and pests to feeding sites, resulting in negative impacts on wildlife through predation and competition for resources.
- Favouring aggressive species or individuals leading to unnatural densities and disadvantaging threatened species.
- Wildlife becoming a nuisance and acting aggressively towards people to obtain food.

## 6.5 Rehabilitation and release of wildlife

Animals assessed as fit for release post veterinary examination at the triage unit can be transferred to a Wildlife Field Assessment Team for release back into suitable habitat. The release site should be within their home range provided it is safe with an available and sustainable food source.

Animals assessed as requiring ongoing support and rehabilitation are transferred to experienced local rehabilitators for care until fit for release. Rehabilitators must ensure that individual animal treatment plans are followed and that the animal is reassessed as directed by a registered veterinarian at regular intervals. Wildlife assessed as being able to survive in the wild by a veterinarian should be released within their home range.

## 6.6 Planning longer term recovery

Victoria's emergency management arrangements identify DEECA as being responsible for assessment including agricultural impact and loss information and referring animal owners to appropriate services. DEECA will deliver this role in partnership with other recovery agencies including councils.

Information collected by DEECA on impacts (social, economic, environmental) during and after significant emergency events can inform government of support, rehabilitation, or recovery needs.

In the case of livestock, rehabilitation and recovery planning will consider feed planning and pasture management, water supplies including dam management and animal health considerations.

DEECA may also undertake longer term planning and interventions to protect and support impacted wildlife and ecosystems. Impacts on threatened species by an emergency event will also be assessed to determine what are the most effective recovery activities for the species impacted. This work generally occurs after the emergency event has concluded and may run for several years.

# 7.0 Emergency management

## 7.1 Command, control, and coordination

Victorian emergency response management operates within a three-tiered framework – state, regional and incident.

Victoria bases its emergency response arrangements on the management functions of command, control, and coordination.

- Command is the direction of response activities internally within an agency to use its people, resources, governance, systems, and processes to discharge its responsibilities in line with relevant legislation.
- Control is the direction of response activities across agencies, horizontally, including the coordination and tasking of other agencies.
- Coordination is the bringing together of people, resources, governance, systems, and processes, to ensure effective response to and relief and recovery from an emergency.
- Coordination operates:
  1. Vertically within an agency as a function of command.
  2. Horizontally across agencies as a function of the authority to control.

A control agency is the agency responsible for leading the response to a particular type of emergency. The SEMP addresses emergency management agency roles, including defining control agencies and key support agencies for response.

Appendix 1 of the Plan identifies the emergencies that are likely to have animal welfare implications, the control agency and primary state government animal welfare support agencies, associated plans and procedures that describe specific operational arrangements.

In the case of cetacean entanglements, strandings and vessel strike, wildlife affected by marine pollution emergencies, wildlife welfare arising from an emergency event and exotic animal disease incursions, animal welfare is an intrinsic aspect of managing the emergency with DEECA exercising control of these emergencies.

In other emergencies such as bushfire, floods and heat events, impacts on animal welfare may arise because of the emergency. In these instances, Agriculture Victoria State Agency Commander will ensure effective provision of the agency's emergency animal welfare response, relief and recovery responsibilities for livestock and companion animals. The DEECA State Agency Commanders (SAC) and State Duty Officer (Wildlife Emergencies) will ensure effective provision of the agency's emergency wildlife welfare response, relief and recovery responsibilities.

DEECA will represent animal welfare interests for livestock and companion animals and wildlife at all tiers by active participation in Emergency Management Teams (EMTs) that are convened, in the event of an emergency, or in readiness for an anticipated emergency.

## 7.2 State Emergency Management Priorities

The State Emergency Management Priorities defined in the SEMP underpin and guide all decisions during a response to any emergency.

The Priorities are:

- Protection and preservation of life and relief of suffering is paramount.

This includes:

- Safety of emergency services personnel; and
- Safety of community members including those most at-risk in emergencies, residents, and visitors/tourists.
- Issuing of community information and community warnings detailing incident information that is timely, relevant, and tailored to assist community members make informed decisions about their safety.
- Protection of critical infrastructure and community assets that supports community resilience.
- Protection of residential property as a place of primary residence.
- Protection of assets supporting individual livelihoods and economic production that supports individual and community financial sustainability.
- Protection of environmental and conservation assets that considers the cultural, biodiversity and social values of the environment.

## 7.3 Incident management system (IMS)

Emergencies by their nature are dynamic and often complex events. As such traditional workplace management arrangements adopted for the planning and delivery of business-as-usual programs are often inadequate to ensure the efficient and effective management of response operations.

An IMS is the system used primarily by the control agency to provide support to the Incident Controller. All control agencies must be able to implement an effective IMS in response to an emergency. An IMS is not a fixed set of rules, but rather a flexible and dynamic methodology that can cater for an escalation or change in the severity of an emergency. All IMS must be based on five key principles:

- Flexibility - The approach must be able to be applied across the full spectrum of incidents and account for variations in the nature of the hazard, the scale of the incident, the complexities presented, the number of agencies and the duration of the incident.
- Management by Objectives - The Incident Controller, with the Incident Management Team (IMT), determines the desired objectives of the incident with the objectives communicated to everyone involved with the incident to ensure a common understanding of what is required.
- Functional Management - Utilisation of functions to manage an incident. For every incident, an Incident Controller is appointed who is ultimately responsible and accountable for all functions. Depending on incident size and complexity, the Incident Controller may elect to delegate functions to others and may also appoint deputies.

- Unity of Effort - One Incident Controller directing and coordinating the actions of all forces, one set of objectives, one Incident Action Plan which is approved by the Incident Controller with each individual reporting to one supervisor.
- Span of Control - Relates to the number of groups or individuals that can be successfully supervised by one person. Up to five reporting groups or individuals is desirable.

Consistent with these principles the Incident Controller holds overall responsibility for managing all activities to resolve the incident. The Incident Controller leads an IMT where the functions of Operations, Planning, Public Information, Logistics, Intelligence, Investigation, Finance, Administration and Safety may be delegated to IMT members.

Three classifications of incident are recognised in the Plan.

### Incident Classification Characteristics

#### Level 1

The region and/or state tiers are not activated for control:

- The response is day-to-day business and the incident is managed by a control agency's incident management team.
- The response is in the incident area only.
- The response duration is less than or a single shift.
- There is little to no potential for escalation. The region and/or state tiers are not activated for coordination.
- There is a single or limited multi-agency response.
- Resources can be sourced from one local government area. The regional and state tiers are not activated for recovery coordination: there is little or no impact on the community and infrastructure.

## Level 2

The region and/or state tiers are activated for control:

- The incident is of medium complexity.
- The response duration is multiple shifts.
- There are one or two incident areas.
- The incident could potentially become an emergency.
- The incident involves multiple hazards. Incident Typical features Level 2 (cont.) The region and/or state tiers are activated for coordination.
- A limited multi-agency response is required.
- The resources of more than one agency must be coordinated.
- There is a medium-term impact on critical infrastructure.
- Resources are sourced from the district or state levels.
- There is a medium impact on the community.

## Level 3

The region and/or state tiers are activated for control:

- The incident is of high complexity.
- The response duration is protracted.
- There are multiple incident areas.
- The incident could likely become a state of emergency or lead to the declaration of a state of disaster. The region and/or state tiers are activated for coordination.
- There is significant impact on critical infrastructure.
- There is actual or potential loss of life or multiple, serious injuries.
- There is major impact on the routine functioning of the community, which needs the establishment of relief services.

## 7.4 DEECA Agriculture Victoria Readiness and Response Arrangements

DEECA Agriculture Victoria has established state and regional roles as part of its emergency readiness arrangements that are in place 365 days per year to provide a point of coordination for emergencies that impact animal welfare.

DEECA Agriculture Victoria's standing readiness roles will actively monitor risks to the welfare of livestock and companion animals as a consequence of current and predicted conditions.

Where an emergency has the potential to impact livestock and companion animals, DEECA Agriculture Victoria's standing readiness roles will liaise with the control agency and other agency representatives at incident, region and state tier control and coordination forums to develop an understanding of the animal welfare situation.

## 7.5 DEECA Wildlife Readiness and Response Arrangements

The State Duty Officer Wildlife Emergencies is a rostered role that is in place 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and reports to the DEECA State Agency Commander (SAC). This position monitors for emergencies where wildlife could, or have been, impacted and ensure preparedness and response activities are being implemented.

The position is responsible for the provision of high-level technical information on wildlife emergencies to the State Agency Commander, Class 2 State Controller (where appointed), Regional Agency Commanders and Incident Controllers. This will include advice on appropriate response protocols, staffing and key messaging. This position is the key technical point of contact with other agencies, stakeholders and interest groups as required.



## 7.6 Responding to the needs of animals including wildlife in an emergency

Prior to high-risk days (e.g., Catastrophic fire days, Major Flood warnings) DEECA, will facilitate the provision of situational information and intelligence to relevant partners, organisations, and welfare groups to assist with operational readiness.

In the event of an emergency impacting animals, including wildlife, DEECA will ensure appropriate measures are in place to address such impacts.

Where the incident has resulted in, or has the potential to result, in significant animal welfare impacts, DEECA's preferred approach is for animal welfare operations to be fully integrated with the control agency's response operations. Where DEECA is not the control agency for the incident, its agency commanders will engage the Incident Controller via the EMT to ascertain the most appropriate level of integration for the incident.

In these instances, DEECA teams will actively engage with the control agency, councils and relevant animal welfare agencies and support organisations to:

- Communicate known and anticipated animal welfare impacts.
- Explain existing management arrangements in place to resolve the emergency(s).
- Advise on current and anticipated levels of resourcing required to address these impacts.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of agencies and organisations against the Plan and confirm contact details; and
- Confirm ongoing management, resourcing, logistics, communication, and reporting arrangements.

## 7.7 Initial impact assessment

The SEMP specifies that control agencies are responsible for instigating and managing initial impact assessment for the purposes of capturing the nature and scale of the impact of an incident. Initial impact assessment is undertaken in the first 48 hours of an incident and may lead to the early identification of animal welfare issues.

The basic information required by DEECA to respond to animal welfare issues relates to the location, type, and approximate number of impacted animals. This information should be referred to DEECA in the case of all animals. This information will be used to assist DEECA to scope and prioritise the delivery of animal welfare response activities.

## 7.8 Processes for requesting supplementary resources

When supplementary resources (personnel, equipment, or services) are needed to respond to animal welfare, the principles for accessing resources defined in the SEMP will be followed. Principles are based on an agency or organisation first exhausting all resources owned or directly within their control (i.e., through a pre-existing arrangement) prior to requesting assistance from elsewhere.

Agriculture Victoria can access RSPCA (Victoria) and interstate government resources if necessary and facilitate access to non-government volunteer organisations that may not be detailed in municipal plans.

At the local level, requests for supplementary resources should be submitted to the Municipal Emergency Management Officer (MEMO), ensuring the Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator (MERC) is aware of the request. It is noted that the MEMO may perform the role of Municipal Recovery Manager (MRM) in conjunction with their role as MEMO during an emergency. Following a request for animal welfare support resources, the MERC will source resources from the responsible regional agency commanders.

At the regional level, requests for resources can be submitted directly to the responsible DEECA regional agency commanders (Agriculture Victoria or FFMVic). The regional agency commander will seek resources within the region and if necessary, escalate unfulfilled resource requests to the responsible agency commander.



## 7.9 Managing supplementary resources including volunteers

Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2017*, employers have an obligation to 'provide such information, instruction, training or supervision to employees of the employer as is necessary to enable those persons to perform their work in a way that is safe and without risks to health'. This obligation is extended to engaged contractors and volunteers deployed directly by an agency.

Volunteers deployed directly by DEECA are required to work within established emergency management structures to maintain personal safety, prevent duplication of effort and ensure the efficient and effective use of resources. For these reasons, volunteers are required to abide by established volunteer management processes which include pre-requisite training and accreditation, registration, communication, and reporting procedures, as well as the use of personal protective equipment and the adoption of hazard specific safety measures.

DEECA has established arrangements and contracts to deploy private veterinarians for larger scale emergencies that require additional veterinary expertise. This surge veterinarian capacity will be deployed at short notice from the pre-identified pool of trained and contracted veterinarians' and will provide additional expertise and capacity in the event of significant level 3 emergencies where animal welfare impacts are at a scale that require additional resources.

## Livestock and companion animals

DEECA has access to a contact list of animal welfare organisations through the VEAW committee that can assist in the delivery of animal welfare support services during an emergency.

A role of the VEAW committee is to provide access to additional paid and volunteer resources through the animal welfare committee partners as the emergency impacts and resourcing requires.

The VEAW committee has a broad range of networks that can access resources both specific to the immediate animal welfare need, and geographic location of the emergency. The VEAW committee also holds the current knowledge of the most appropriately skilled paid and/or volunteer organisations to address the specific animal welfare related issue within the emergency.

## Wildlife

The Wildlife Emergency Support Network (WESN) has been established to assist DEECA during emergency response activities for bushfire events where wildlife is impacted by providing volunteers and contractors for training, accreditation, and potential deployment. Members of the WESN include wildlife rescuers, rehabilitators and wildlife transporters, general practice veterinarians and veterinary nurses as well as Zoos Victoria veterinarians, veterinary nurses, and zookeepers. Once trained and accredited, WESN members are equipped with relevant personal protective equipment and can be asked to join DEECA staff in field assessment and triage teams when required.



## 7.10 Access to impacted areas

To ensure the safety of paid and volunteer personnel involved in animal welfare activities, authorisation to enter the area impacted by the emergency must first be obtained from the Incident Controller. Permission to enter areas will be based on arrangements described in the *Guidelines for the Operation of Traffic Management Points During Class 1 Emergencies* and the *Joint Agency Standard Operating Procedure for Traffic Management at emergencies (JSOP J03.10)*. DEECA RACs will liaise with Incident Controllers to establish safe access to impacted areas at the earliest opportunity.

## 7.11 Information collection and sharing

Agencies and organisations working under the direction of DEECA will use established forms and reporting systems and processes to enable comprehensive and consolidated reporting of loss and damage information and referral of specific animal welfare needs. This summary information will be provided to control agencies and councils as required.

Referral of specific animal welfare needs, including those identified through control agency initial impact assessment, may require disclosure of personal information to other agencies or organisations involved in the provision of these services. To ensure information sharing is consistent with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (VIC)*, the following principles apply:

- Wherever possible, when collecting information from affected persons for use by other agencies or organisations, the collecting party will disclose the purpose of collection to the affected person;
- Personal information will only be disclosed to other agencies or organisations involved in the management of the emergency or for the provision of relief and recovery services; and

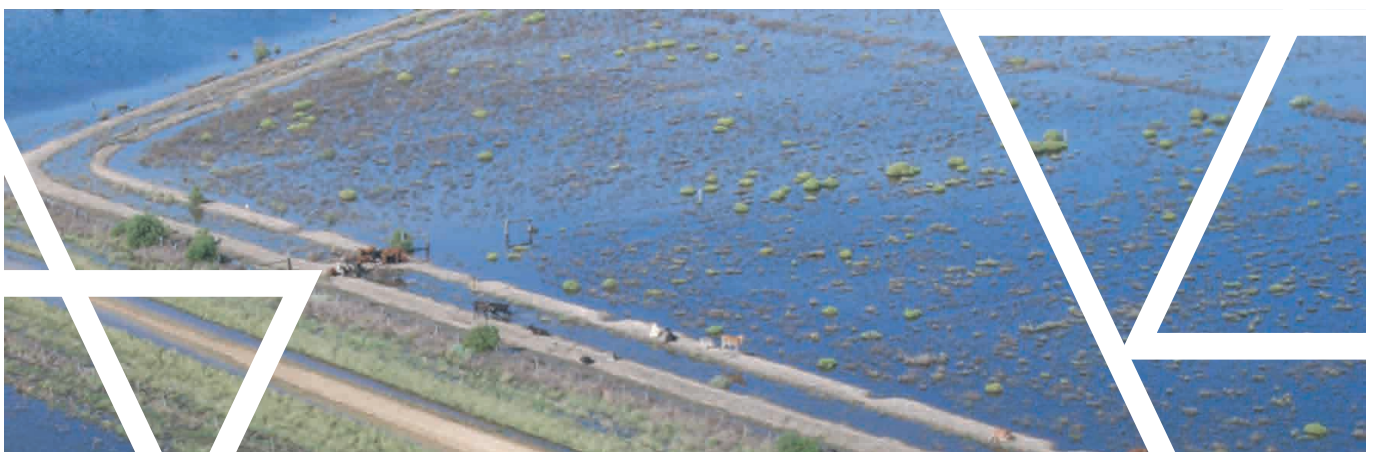
- Agencies and organisations are required to use and share information for the original purposes for which it was obtained only, unless the collecting agency or organisation believes the use or disclosure is necessary for law enforcement purposes

DEECA is authorised to provide data to other agencies, departments and councils directly involved in the management of response, relief and recovery to assist them in their emergency response, relief, and recovery roles.

The Information and Privacy Provisions 2.1(d) allows use or disclosure to occur where the organisation reasonably believes it is necessary to lessen or prevent:

- A serious threat to an individual's life, health, safety, or welfare, or
- A serious threat to public health, public safety, or public welfare.

Other information requires the permission of the landholder during assessments and includes sharing urgent personal referrals (e.g., food, portable water, emergency accommodations, personal counselling) and animal assistance (e.g., fodder, stock water, carcass disposal) with applicable agencies, departments and councils. The applicable agency, department or council is provided with the contact details of the landholder and the personal assistance they require.



# 8.0 Roles and responsibilities

In an emergency, animal welfare is often compromised at a time when the owners and carers of animals are under great stress. While primary responsibility and duty of care always remains with the person in charge of an animal, emergency animal support services provided by a range of government and non-government agencies and organisations can assist. A brief description of the roles and responsibilities of key agencies and organisations is provided below.

## 8.1 AVA (Victorian Division)

<b>Prevention / Mitigation / Risk reduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Distribute DEECA fact sheets and information to veterinarians.</li><li>• Publish bushfire related treatment resources on the AVA website and circulate to members where appropriate.</li></ul>
<b>Response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contact AVA members and other relevant stakeholders who may be affected to gather information about the situation.</li><li>• Inform AVA members and other relevant stakeholders about the emergency response.</li><li>• Utilise the resources of the AVA Communications Team as appropriate.</li><li>• Assist DEECA with the dissemination of relevant information.</li></ul>
<b>Relief</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Facilitate communication between veterinarians and AVA through telephone contact and electronic communications.</li><li>• Assist in the identification of veterinarians and practices within affected regions.</li><li>• Report urgent animal welfare needs arising from the emergency to DEECA. In consultation with DEECA liaise with Zoos Victoria in the dissemination of information and advice for veterinarians regarding the treatment of wildlife.</li></ul>
<b>Recovery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advise the AVA Benevolent Fund of veterinarians in difficult financial circumstances as a result of the emergency.</li></ul>

## 8.2 Country Fire Authority

<b>Prevention / Mitigation / Risk reduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure animal welfare arrangements are included in all state, regional and incident plans.</li><li>• Work with DEECA in the development and delivery of appropriate animal welfare messages in community education programs.</li></ul>
<b>Response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When a control agency, ensure approved animal welfare messages are provided to the community and media.</li><li>• Ensure animal welfare and other rural issues identified through initial impact assessment activities are referred to DEECA.</li></ul>

## 8.3 Department of Health

### Prevention / Mitigation / Risk reduction

- Ensure animal welfare arrangements are included in all state, regional and incident plans in relation to Zoonotic Diseases and Pandemics.

### Relief

- Ensure animal welfare requests for assistance are referred in accordance with established protocols.
- Liaise with DEECA where emergencies impact on human health to identify if there are any associated animal health issues.

## 8.4 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

### Prevention / Mitigation / Risk reduction

- Ensure animal welfare arrangements are included in all state, regional and incident plans.

### Relief

- Ensure animal welfare requests for assistance are referred in accordance with established protocols.



## 8.5 Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action

### Livestock and companion animals

<b>Prevention / Mitigation / Risk reduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Represent DEECA and the state's managed animal welfare arrangements on relevant emergency management and animal welfare committees and forums.</li><li>• In partnership with control agencies, develop and implement community education programs to inform animal owners of their responsibilities during an emergency.</li><li>• Communicate emergency welfare arrangements and operational requirements for managed animals to relevant stakeholders.</li><li>• Provide advice to agencies, organisations and the community regarding livestock and domestic animal welfare management in emergencies and risk management planning.</li><li>• Develop, maintain, and communicate protocols that describe restrictions and standards to be used by all personnel, including animal welfare volunteers, deployed by DEECA as part of their animal welfare operations (training needs, personal protective equipment, communications, fatigue management and other OHS requirements).</li><li>• Maintain and regularly review this Plan.</li><li>• Provide animal welfare planning advice to Municipal and Regional Emergency Management Planning Committees.</li><li>• Maintain the VEAWC as the sector's consultative forum to develop, maintain and review the Plan and support its implementation.</li></ul>
<b>Response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide advice to control and support agencies regarding the impact, or potential impact of an emergency on managed animal welfare, including risks and management strategies.</li><li>• Liaise with councils and relevant animal welfare agencies and organisations to enable effective and timely delivery of managed animal welfare support services during an emergency.</li><li>• Develop information for the public and media relating to the management of managed animals impacted by the emergency, for release through the Incident Controller.</li></ul>
<b>Relief</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Liaise with councils and animal welfare support agencies and organisations to ensure effective allocation of resources.</li><li>• Identify and assess injured and affected animals (other than wildlife).</li><li>• Provide advice on options for treatment, humane destruction, or emergency salvage slaughter.</li><li>• Where necessary, assist with humane destruction of injured or affected animals.</li><li>• Inform and coordinate animal welfare organisations, volunteer groups or community groups wanting to contribute.</li><li>• Assess and report losses and damage to agricultural assets and animals and needs of affected persons and communities to government.</li><li>• Investigate complaints relevant to animal welfare.</li><li>• Liaise with DH where emergencies impacting on human health may also have associated animal health issues.</li></ul>
<b>Recovery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide advice about feed planning and pasture management, water supplies including dam management, and animal health considerations, which will vary depending on the incident type (e.g., fly strike, foot rot).</li></ul>

## Wildlife

### Prevention / Mitigation / Risk Reduction Activities

- Develop policy, programs, and training for responding to wildlife welfare during emergencies.
- Represent DEECA and the state's wildlife welfare arrangements on relevant emergency management and animal welfare committees and forums.
- Communicate emergency wildlife welfare arrangements and operational requirements to relevant stakeholders.
- Provide advice to agencies, organisations, and the community regarding wildlife welfare management in emergencies and risk management planning.
- Develop partnerships and agreements with key organisations to support DEECA in responding to emergency events on wildlife welfare including the Wildlife Emergency Support Network.
- Provide animal welfare planning advice to Municipal and Regional EM Planning Committees.

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### Response Activities

- Response scope defined by individual hazard plans for the emergency type, including:
  - Victorian Response Plan for Heat Stress in Flying Foxes
  - Victorian Response Plan for Wildlife Impacted by Fire.
- Undertake welfare assessments of impacted wildlife where safe to do so, consistent with endorsed hazard plans.
- Ensure the veterinary assessment and treatment of wildlife taken into care.
- Provide advice to government and emergency agencies regarding impacts of animal welfare for wildlife.
- Inform and coordinate animal welfare organisations, volunteer groups or community groups in relation to public messaging and external communications.
- Activate, deploy, and manage the Wildlife Emergency Support Network when activated.
- Provide advice to response agencies regarding the impact of an emergency on wildlife.
- Develop information for the public and media relating to the management of wildlife impacted by the emergency, for release through the Incident Controller.

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### Relief Activities

- Liaise with Agriculture Victoria, councils and animal welfare support agencies and organisations to ensure effective allocation of resources.
- Provide scientific and technical advice to Lead Response agencies to minimise impact of the emergency event on high value ecosystems or species.
- undertake the relief coordination of surveying and protecting threatened ecosystems, native plants and animals.

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### Recovery Activities

- Provide advice on appropriate management and release of wildlife from rehabilitation.
  - Provide scientific and technical advice on targeted interventions and response plans to maintain species diversity and presence within an ecosystem.
  - develop and implement protection activities and projects to support ecosystem recovery and regeneration.
  - Survey and mitigate risks to protect threatened bird, marsupial, aquatic and plant species affected by emergencies on land within its portfolio and provide advisory services to others.
  - Undertake targeted interventions to maintain ecosystems and threatened species.
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## 8.6 Emergency Management Victoria

<b>Prevention / Mitigation / Risk reduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure animal welfare arrangements are included in all state, regional and municipal plans.</li><li>• Work with DEECA in the development and delivery of appropriate animal welfare messages in community education programs.</li></ul>
<b>Response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure approved animal welfare messages are provided to the community and media.</li><li>• Ensure animal welfare and other rural issues identified through initial impact assessment activities are referred to DEECA.</li></ul>

## 8.7 Local Government

<b>Prevention / Mitigation / Risk Reduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure emergency relief and recovery components of MEMPs detail local emergency animal welfare arrangements and providers for relevant animal welfare services including consideration of the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– DEECA contacts for animal assessment activities,</li><li>– options for the housing and management of displaced animals, including those presenting at emergency relief centres,</li><li>– potential sites for donated fodder distribution,</li><li>– alternative emergency water sources for animals, and</li><li>– systems for the management of offers of assistance or donations made to councils.</li></ul></li><li>• Communicate municipal animal welfare contacts and arrangements to relevant stakeholders.</li><li>• Reference animal welfare information in publications and websites to assist broader community awareness, education and understanding.</li></ul>
<b>Response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Liaise with relevant local animal welfare agencies and organisations to enable effective and timely delivery of council’s animal welfare support services.</li><li>• Provide input to information for the public and media relating to the management of animals impacted by the emergency and arrangements for relocated animals for release by the Incident Controller.</li></ul>
<b>Relief</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide assistance with urgent animal welfare needs, including emergency shelter, water, or fodder.</li><li>• Manage donated goods and services offered to the municipality.</li><li>• Emergency confinement of stray animals within the council area.</li><li>• Referral of animal welfare needs to responsible and animal welfare support organisations.</li><li>• Provide a municipal point of contact for other agencies and organisations (e.g., control agencies, DEECA, RSPCA (Victoria), AVA and VFF), in relation to animal welfare needs or issues.</li><li>• Make provisions for animals presenting at emergency relief centres that include provision for the registration, treatment, and housing of animals at the relief centre or advise animal owners of alternative arrangements where animals cannot be housed at the site.</li></ul>
<b>Recovery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support relevant land managers in clean-up activities for the disposal of deceased animals (managed, wildlife and pest species).</li><li>• Work with DEECA to assist in ongoing animal welfare recovery within the municipality.</li><li>• Coordinate recovery services for animal owners and carers.</li></ul>

## 8.8 Fire Rescue Victoria

<b>Prevention / Mitigation / Risk reduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure animal welfare arrangements are included in all state and regional plans.</li><li>• Work with DEECA in the development and delivery of appropriate animal welfare messages in community education programs.</li></ul>
<b>Response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When a control agency, ensure approved animal welfare messages are provided to the community and media.</li><li>• Ensure animal welfare issues identified through initial impact assessment activities are referred to DEECA.</li></ul>

## 8.9 Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Victoria)

<b>Prevention / Mitigation / Risk reduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lead the annual review of the RSPCA (Victoria) Emergency Response Plan and associated documents.</li></ul>
<b>Relief</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assist DEECA to undertake animal welfare assessment activities in accordance with established emergency management structures, when requested.</li><li>• Report animal welfare needs in accordance with established emergency reporting systems and processes.</li><li>• Manage the distribution of donations made to RSPCA (Victoria) to established distribution centres.</li><li>• Provide advice to pet and horse owners on issues relating to animal welfare.</li><li>• Respond, where appropriate, to requests for animal welfare resources, in accordance with the State's emergency resource supplementation process.</li></ul>
<b>Recovery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support relevant land managers in clean-up activities for the disposal of deceased animals (managed, wildlife and pest species).</li><li>• Provide advice to pet and horse owners on issues relating to animal welfare.</li></ul>

## 8.10 Victorian Farmers Federation

<b>Prevention / Mitigation / Risk reduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contribute to the development of plans and protocols for the provision of fodder relief to assist the farming community to minimise the effects of emergencies on animals in the care of rural landholders.</li><li>• In consultation with DEECA distribute fact sheets and other technical information to primary producers.</li></ul>
<b>Response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Liaise with DEECA to determine the scale of fodder distribution requirements.</li></ul>
<b>Relief</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appoint a State Fodder Coordinator to coordinate fodder donations and distribution across affected areas.</li><li>• Establish local arrangements to service affected areas based on advice from DEECA.</li><li>• Manage donations of fodder including the transport of fodder to local depots or direct to impacted primary producers.</li><li>• Provide weekly progress reports on fodder distribution operations to DEECA.</li><li>• Assist with the dissemination of relevant information to primary producers.</li></ul>
<b>Recovery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advise DEECA and councils on longer term recovery needs of landholders.</li><li>• Assist with the dissemination of relevant information to primary producers.</li></ul>



## 8.11 Victoria Police

### Prevention / Mitigation / Risk reduction

- Ensure animal welfare arrangements are included in all state, regional and incident plans.

### Response

- When a control agency, ensure approved animal welfare messages are provided to the community and media.
- Ensure arrangements are in place at traffic management points that allow effective and timely delivery of animal welfare support services into impacted areas consistent with agreed guidelines.
- Ensure animal welfare and other rural issues identified through initial impact assessment activities are referred to DEECA.

## 8.12 Victoria State Emergency Service

### Prevention / Mitigation / Risk reduction

- Ensure animal welfare arrangements are included in all state, regional and incident plans.
- Support DEECA measures to integrate emergency animal welfare arrangements into municipal level plans.
- Work with DEECA in the development and delivery of appropriate animal welfare messages in community education programs.

### Response

- When a control agency, ensure approved animal welfare messages are provided to the community and media.
- Ensure managed animal welfare and other rural issues identified through initial impact assessment activities are referred to DEECA.
- Ensure wildlife welfare issues are referred to FFMVic when identified.

## 8.13 Wildlife Emergency Support Network

### Response

- Provides trained and accredited, wildlife rescuers, rehabilitators and wildlife transporters, general practice veterinarians and veterinary nurses, wildlife veterinarians and veterinary nurses and zookeepers to join DEECA staff in field assessment and triage teams during large fire events.

## 8.14 Wildlife Shelters and Carers

<b>Response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide assistance in the rehabilitation of injured wildlife following veterinary assessment during emergencies.</li></ul>
<b>Relief and Recovery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Undertake the rehabilitation and release of wildlife taken into care due to injuries caused by an emergency event</li></ul>

## 8.15 Zoos Victoria

<b>Prevention / Mitigation / Risk reduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assists DEECA in development of procedures and protocols and delivery of training</li></ul>
<b>Response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides assistance in wildlife veterinary assessment and triage during emergency events.</li></ul>
<b>Relief and Recovery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide treatment, care and rehabilitation of wildlife affected by emergencies</li></ul>

## 9.0 Communication

All agencies and organisations are responsible for updating emergency contact lists. DEECA will assist this process by maintaining and distributing its agency's state and regional contact arrangements. DEECA will also develop and distribute key contact details for relevant animal welfare stakeholders.

DEECA will actively promote the Plan and associated updates through volunteer engagement processes, SOPs and related plans and codes of practice/standards with emergency animal welfare support organisations (including RSPCA, AVA and VFF), state government control agencies, councils and the broader community.

DEECA will develop appropriate animal welfare messages for inclusion in community resilience programs managed by emergency management agencies and local government. This activity will include the development and dissemination of information designed to improve animal owners' understanding of their animal welfare responsibilities and enhance their ability to protect and provide for their animals during an emergency.

Biodiversity Division will engage and work with the broader wildlife welfare sector on communicating the Plan and wildlife emergency response arrangements as they exist within Victoria. Central to this will be the ongoing recruitment, training, and interaction of members of the WESN. The Division will also engage with key groups ahead of and during wildlife emergency response.

DEECA will also provide advice on animal welfare information for inclusion in tailored timely and relevant community warnings issued by control agencies to assist community members make informed decisions about their safety and the safety and welfare of the animals under their control.

Further information on livestock and companion animals in emergencies is available at Agriculture Victoria ([www.agriculture.vic.gov.au](http://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au))

<https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/emergency-management/emergency-animal-welfare>

Agriculture Victoria maintains a range of publications including:

- Guidelines for animals at emergency relief centres
- Municipal emergency animal welfare plan template
- Checklists for evacuating with animals
- Codes and standards for the welfare of animals.

Further information about wildlife and emergencies is available on DEECA's wildlife website ([www.wildlife.vic.gov.au](http://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au)).



## 10.0 Training and exercising

Agencies and organisations are responsible for understanding the competencies and level of training required by their personnel to participate in animal welfare related emergencies.

Opportunities will exist to practice integrated animal welfare support service provision through municipal, regional, and state exercises. DEECA will engage with EMV and control agencies at the state, regional and municipal levels to ensure opportunities for exercising of animal welfare arrangements are considered in the development of exercise programs. DEECA will liaise with key animal welfare organisations and council animal management staff to encourage involvement in exercise programs where an animal welfare focus is included.



# 11.0 Evaluation and review

Aligned with continuous improvement, all agencies and organisations with a lead role in animal welfare during an emergency should evaluate their own operational performance in relation to animal welfare responsibilities following an emergency.

DEECA will conduct After Action Reviews (AARs) following emergencies requiring significant activation of the arrangements described in the Plan including all Level 2 / Level 3 emergencies with significant animal welfare impacts. DEECA will ensure appropriate involvement of support agencies (e.g., RSPCA (Victoria), AVA, and VFF) council and volunteers.

DEECA will communicate the outcomes and learnings from AARs to relevant stakeholders.

To ensure consistency with state emergency management arrangements, any material changes to the SEMP will trigger a review and republishing of this plan.

DEECA will also lead a comprehensive review of the Plan in consultation with key stakeholders every three years. The timing of the review will be such that changes can be reflected in the reviews of the SEMP, REMPs, MEMPs and other relevant agency or organisation plans.



# Appendices

## Appendix 1:

Specific operational plans for emergencies that impact animal welfare.

Emergency	Control Agency	Primary Agency for Animal Welfare Support	Relevant Animal Welfare Plans and Procedures
<b>Storm (including hail), Flood, Tsunami, Earthquake</b>	SES DEECA - Wildlife	DEECA Agriculture Victoria – Animals other than wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Plan</li> <li>MEMPs</li> <li>MEAWPs</li> </ul>
<b>Fire</b>	CFA / DEECA / FRV-fire (depending on location) DEECA - Wildlife	DEECA Agriculture Victoria – Livestock and companion animals	Bushfire on public land: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Victorian Response Plan for Wildlife Impacted by Fire</li> <li>Management of Volunteers in Wildlife Emergencies Resource Manual</li> <li>Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Plan</li> </ul>
<b>Cetacean (whale and dolphin) entanglements, strandings and vessel strike</b>	DEECA Wildlife	DEECA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Victorian Cetacean Emergency Plan</li> </ul>
<b>Wildlife affected by marine and freshwater pollution</b>	DEECA-Wildlife		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wildlife Response Plan for Marine Pollution Emergencies</li> </ul>
<b>Transport Incidents (involving livestock)</b>	Victoria Police	DEECA Agriculture Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agriculture Victoria Standard Operating Procedure: Transport Accidents Involving Livestock in Transit</li> <li>Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Plan</li> </ul>
<b>Hazardous spills or leaks (gas leaks, chemical, oil, radioactive or biological)</b>	Gas, Chemical, Oil (CFA, FRV) Biological and radioactive (DH) DEECA - Wildlife	DEECA – Animals other than wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Plan</li> </ul>
<b>State Heat Plan</b>	Emergency Management Commissioner DEECA – Wildlife	DEECA– Animals other than wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Victorian Response Plan for Heat Stress in Flying Foxes</li> <li>Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Plan</li> </ul>



[agriculture.vic.gov.au/animalemergency](http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/animalemergency)

