

FIRE RECOVERY CHECKLIST

January/February 2020

This straightforward checklist is to assist farmers after the damage of bushfire.

FAMILY

- Ensure the safety and wellbeing of yourself, family and friends.
- Talk to family and friends about your experience.
- Start doing a few small, safe, jobs.
- Manage offers of assistance by recording names and phone numbers.
- Take plenty of photos and notes for insurance and future reference.
- Identify and isolate on-farm hazards such as:
 - fallen powerlines
 - asbestos contaminated sites
 - chemical storage areas
 - sheep dips and spray areas
 - lead and other heavy metal contaminated sites (batteries, treated pine etc.).

STOCK

- Manage the health and welfare of your animals by:
 - reporting injured livestock to Agriculture Victoria on 1800 226 226 so that our animal health staff can assess the livestock
 - euthanise impacted livestock if you are confident that you can do so humanely, or contact Agriculture Victoria for assistance
 - continuing to monitor all stock on a regular basis
 - providing adequate food, water and shelter to remaining animals.

WATER SUPPLY

- Protect your drinking water by diverting downpipes until an initial flush (of roof and pipes).
- Protect your dam water by:
 - skimming off floating debris and organic matter
 - trapping ash, debris, organic matter and sediment with closely spaced steel posts, ring-lock, netting or sediment traps

- fencing and reticulation
 - consolidating water supplies with pumps and pipe
 - removing floating debris off dams after rain
 - de-silting dams
- Remove stock if water becomes putrid, looks or smells rotten or has signs of blue green algae (paint-like scum on surface).

FENCING

- Mark boundary fence alignment prior to clean-up.
- Seek assistance with clearing boundary fence lines.
- Fencing (con).
- Avoid replacing internal fencing immediately; fire offers an opportunity to re-think your farm layout.
- Consider:
 - patching up old fences wherever possible
 - a new fence alignment or gate location/s
 - replacing fencing along land class boundaries
 - requesting an aerial photo plan of your farm to review your farm layout
 - seeking advice from Agriculture Victoria staff on re-fencing and whole farm planning.

PASTURES

- If possible, de-stock burnt and partly burnt paddocks.
- Seek potential for outside agistment.
- Consider building a stock containment area or sacrifice paddock to limit grazing to a defined area (to protect your pastures and soil).
- Perennial pastures and sub-clover are generally unaffected by fire, however fire can have a major impact on annual pastures.
- Consider setting up a watered pasture trial plot to assess plant survival.

SOILS

- Seek assistance with rehabilitation of firebreaks and access tracks.
- Consider protecting loose, sandy soils from wind erosion with cover crop of oats, deep ripping or ridging.
- Upgrade track drainage to minimise erosion.

NATIVE VEGETATION

- A significant proportion of native vegetation will survive a bushfire; give it time to recover.
- Watch for burning tree roots three to six months after the fire.

WEEDS

- Contain weed spread by feeding stock in one location, such as a containment area.
- Closely monitor areas disturbed by firefighting or recovery activities.

FLOODING

- Flooding can be a major issue following a bushfire.
- Protect your house and other facilities from flooding with earthen banks or sand bags.
- Install closely spaced steel posts upstream of culverts and stream crossings to trap debris.
- Regularly check your dam spillways and banks for damage.
- Regularly check erosion control structures for damage.

For more information call Agriculture Victoria on 136 186, visit agriculture.vic.gov.au or contact your local fire recovery centre.

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