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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