

IN AN EMERGENCY, WHO RELIES ON YOU?



FACTSHEET: ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS FOR ANIMALS IN EMERGENCIES

This Blue ARC Factsheet is provided to assist you with planning for animals in emergencies. It addresses three questions raised by Blue Mountains residents in our Animals in Emergencies Survey.

Q: Where can I take my animals if I need to relocate or evacuate them?

Planning where to take your animals if you need to relocate ahead of time or evacuate in an emergency can be challenging. It's always best to consider accommodation options for your animals ahead of time and to prepare for a range of scenarios. Depending on your mix of animals and the options you have available, you may need to take animals to different places and this may take more time – factor this into your emergency planning.



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Here are some accommodation suggestions to help you plan.



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a) Accommodation with family and friends: This is the most common accommodation solution that people choose and it is likely to be the most comfortable option for you and your animals. If possible, have a number of options and review them regularly to ensure that they will work for you and your friends or family members, as circumstances (and pet ownership situations) can change.

b) Boarding facilities: There are limited boarding options for animals in the Blue Mountains and they are mainly for dogs, cats and small animals. These facilities could also be at risk during an emergency and there will be increased demand. Daily boarding costs vary from \$15 - \$40+ per animal, and animals taken to boarding facilities need to have up to date vaccination records. Blue ARC has a list of boarding options in the Blue Mountains and surrounding areas.

c) Evacuation centres: Evacuation centres focus on the care of people and there may be little or no provision made for animals. Evacuation centres are busy and stressful places, and although you can

take your animals there you may not be allowed to bring them inside. You will be expected to be responsible for your animals and you will need to bring an emergency kit to provide for your animal's needs. Evacuation centres are a focus for support services and are likely to be a good place to get further advice and help. As emergencies can be unpredictable it is not possible to know in advance where your nearest evacuation centre will be. Listen to ABC radio updates and check on the relevant emergency service's website for information.

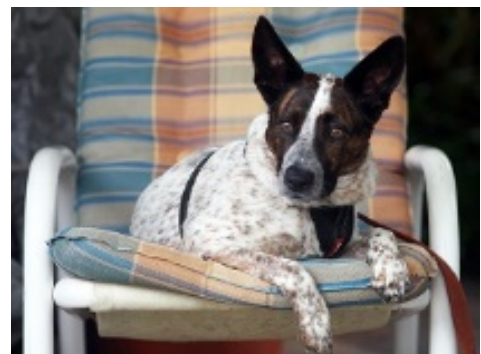
d) Animal Holding Facilities and Animal-Friendly Evacuation Centres: Specific animal evacuation sites may be opened for the temporary housing of animals. At these locations you will still be



Frenchs Forest Large Animal Staging Area (November 2019)

responsible for the care of your animals and depending on the site, there may be some limited existing accommodation for your animals, such as stalls for horses at showgrounds. The availability and location of animal-friendly facilities will be broadcast in the same way as evacuation centres. Unless co-located with a human evacuation centre, there may be no specific accommodation for people – so you will need to take a tent or caravan.

e) Pet-friendly accommodation: If you are looking for short term rental options where you can be housed together with your animals, you could look at businesses like Stayz, Airbnb, tourist sites, caravan parks and motels to see what pet friendly options may be available. It is important to do this research well before an emergency occurs.

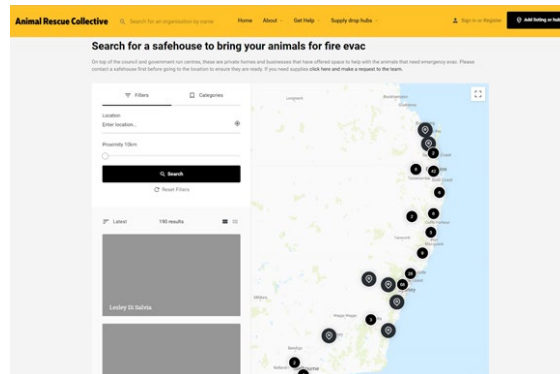


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f) Neighbourhood Safer Places: Neighbourhood Safer Places are a place of last resort during a bushfire emergency and are not somewhere you should be planning (ahead of time) to go to. There will be no assistance there for you or your animals. If you need to evacuate to a Neighbourhood Safer Place it is important that your animals are kept under your effective control at all times.

g) Accommodation with a 'buddy': Horse owners in some areas have been using 'buddy systems' to help in emergencies, but this approach can work for other animal owners too. Here, prior contact is made with someone – most likely similar to you, with similar animals, and an informal arrangement is made to help each other out in an emergency with accommodation for your animals (and possibly you as well!). This option can work well when both you and your buddy have different risks, e.g. one is in a bushfire prone area and the other is on a floodplain, as you both know you may need help but it's unlikely that both bushfire and flood will happen at the same time. This option can also work for people who are just in different geographical areas with or without both being 'at risk'. A good way to find a buddy is through an existing network, such as animal-related groups like pony clubs, show/breeding groups, or other types of networks, such as faith-based groups, sports clubs, Scouts, or work colleagues.

h) Just-in-time accommodation for animals via social media: Although volunteer-run groups offering assistance with the care of animals may exist before an emergency, but some form via social media during emergencies. Many groups host databases detailing temporary accommodation offers for animals, made by members of the public. Offers of assistance may be helpful via these routes if you don't have existing plans or your plans fall through, but they should be approached with general caution as this is an arrangement you're making with someone you don't know. The hosting site is likely not to accept responsibility for any arrangements made between parties. Consider the practical, safety and welfare needs of your animals, e.g. secure housing, protection from dangers, and whether there is any screening of accommodation offers. If you are planning to use this last-minute option note that social media may be compromised during emergencies when power is lost or mobile networks are disrupted.



Animal Rescue Collective - Animal Safehouse in Bushfire search site <https://rescuedpets.com.au/safehousesearch/>

For all accommodation options mentioned you need to have an emergency kit prepared for your animal's needs. Links to resources to help you with this are available on the Blue ARC Facebook page.

If you don't know where to take your animals, go to an evacuation centre. During an emergency it is much safer to LEAVE EARLY and go to an evacuation centre WITH YOUR ANIMALS than stay at home because you don't know where to go.

Q: What do I need to consider when looking for accommodation for my animals?



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When thinking about where to take your animals there are three main aspects to consider; practical, welfare, and safety. Below are some questions, provided as prompts, to ask yourself when making decisions for your animals. This is not an exhaustive list, but it may help you to remember something important to ask or check. In an emergency you may need to use a short term accommodation option to get your animals out of immediate danger, and then revise your plans as the emergency situation unfolds if you can't get back home straight away.

Practical: Will I be caring for my animals or will I be leaving them in someone else's care? What do I need to take for my animals, e.g. a full evacuation kit, medicines, or just vaccination documents? Are there costs involved? How long can my animals stay for? How far will I need to travel to visit or care for my animals?

Welfare: Is there adequate provision of food and water? Is veterinary assistance available if needed? Is there adequate shelter for protection from extremes of weather? Is there a comfortable resting area? Is there protection from the transmission of disease and parasites? Is there care available to assist animals with toileting, exercising, and to provide emotional support to them? Is there adequate space to move around and toilet in? Is there access to exercise facilities? Will my animals be left alone for long periods of time, e.g. if you're caring for them a distance away and no one is there to assist? Will they be bored, lonely, anxious – is there anything that can be done to minimise these possibilities?



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Safety: Is this accommodation low-risk, e.g. no/low bushfire risk? Is it secure – adequate fencing/containment? Is there protection from environmental dangers, such as predators and other animals? Is the animal carer experienced in handling stressed/anxious animals – or managing my animal's special needs? Is there emergency planning in place at the facility in case they are also impacted by an emergency?

Q: Where can I get help to make a plan for my animals?

Blue ARC advertises links to existing official resources to assist you with planning for your animals. In addition, preparedness for an emergency is strengthened through discussing challenges and uncertainties, and making connections, with people in your community.



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- Consider the people you already know who you could talk with e.g. family members, friends, neighbours, colleagues at work, people in a faith-based group you belong to, staff at your local neighbourhood centre.
- Get to know your neighbours better.
- Speak to the staff at your local veterinary clinic.
- Contact your local council.
- Keep up to date with community initiatives and meetings - 'Get Ready' events are held in spring in the Blue Mountains every year, with RFS Open Days and stalls at community markets, 'Meet Your Street' events, Bushfire Community Meetings.
- Join online communities e.g. animal-related groups on Facebook with people who volunteer at animal shelters, own poultry, care for horses etc., where you can discuss issues and help support each other if there is an emergency.
- Join groups e.g. a local pony club, a show club, or dog training club.

Even if there are parts of your plan you need help with there are still things you can do TODAY to help prepare yourself, your family, and your animals for an emergency.