

RMP – During the Fire

You should plan on the basis that you will receive no official warning that a fire is coming. You must be aware that firefighters will be concentrating their efforts on controlling the fire. When fire comes your way, your personal safety and that of the people working with you must be your first concern, so:

- try to remain calm and alert, think clearly and act decisively
- pay attention to weather conditions and fire behaviour. Watch for a sudden change in wind direction or speed, a dramatic change in air temperature or humidity, or smoke and ash or burning embers dropping around you
- monitor weather forecasts and media broadcasts, especially ABC radio and local community radio stations for emergency information
- maintain good communications with the people you're working with, give clear instructions and make sure they are understood
- cooperate with firefighters and other emergency services. Your safety and the safety of other civilians and emergency personnel are their paramount concern.

If your property is closely threatened by a bushfire and you cannot move your horses to a safer district:

- fill troughs, baths, sinks and metal buckets (plastic ones melt) with reserve water for later use
- turn off power and gas and disconnect electrical
- fences
- remove all equipment from your horse. Rugs burn, plastic headstalls melt and metal buckles may get hot
- move your horses into your previously identified
- "safe" area
- if you take horses out of stables, close the doors to prevent them running back into their perceived "safe" area

- if you are shifting fractious horses when a fire is very close, a temporary blindfold over the eyes may help
- if hoses are still operational wet tails and manes or drench the horse in water if it has to pass near or through fire. Early veterinary literature based on stable fires suggests that this will protect a horse from serious burns for about half a minute afterwards.



Remember; give your horses plenty of room to move. Past experience of bushfires indicates that horses will suffer minimal burns if given maximum space. They will gallop through flames, or around their edges, and stand on the blackened, previously burnt area and remain there until the fire has passed. Do not shut horses in stables or small yards. Never turn them out on the road. They will be in danger from traffic **AND** the fire. There is also the risk that they may cause a car accident.

The main fire-front usually passes relatively quickly (10 - 20 minutes in bushland and a few minutes for grass fires). There is little one can do during this time. While horses might gain confidence from the nearness of humans and a calming voice, you cannot provide this assurance when smoke is everywhere and the sound of the fire is deafening. **Go inside the house and do not put your own life in additional danger.** Your horse will cope well on its own if it has a chance to move in open space.