



*"Devils on Horseback"*

## Preparation – The key to survival for you and your horses

### Practicing for Emergency

All horse owners already lead busy lives and trying to squeeze in emergency practices seems unrealistic and unnecessary – until you are threatened by a bushfire.

Practicing your plan before the danger period not only gives you time to refine the plan but it improves your confidence in the plan. That confidence will help you resist poor decisions caused by panic.

Having developed your plan in the low risk season, you already have a degree of confidence and understanding about what will happen in an emergency. You have an Individual Fire Plan for your property that includes your horses. You know and have communicated your activation triggers and you have established a horse safe area, as well as primary and alternative access and egress routes for evacuation.

In addition, you have a good group of fire buddies, an emergency cache for 24-96 hrs self-sufficiency and your horses and property are identified through major local and national databases.

Practicing your plan allows you to confidently predict how long it takes to evacuate your horses or move them to the safe area, which gates need to be opened and which doors, yards or stables need to be secured.

### Activation

Regardless of how busy you are, you must respond to your activation trigger.

Fire moves incredibly fast so you may not get official warning in time to evacuate.

**You must be aware that emergency response personnel will be concentrating on controlling the fire, saving people, property and infrastructure – not ponies.**

#### Your personal safety is paramount:

- Remain calm and alert
- Think clearly, follow your plan
- Be decisive- indecision and panic can kill
- Maintain good, clear communications with your family members or employers
- Give clear, concise instructions
- Check for understanding (repeat back to me)
- Pay attention to the weather condition and fire behaviour
- Watch for sudden wind changes, whether speed or direction
- Be prepared for sudden changes in air temperature or humidity
- Watch for ash, embers or smoke
- Monitor official Emergency Broadcaster (ABC Local Radio) for information

**COOPERATE WITH EMERGENCY  
RESPONSE PERSONNEL AT ALL TIMES**

## Keeping Safe - You

Wear safe clothing. In the event a fire threatens, whether your plan is to go or stay, the right clothing can shield you from radiant heat, embers and flames:

- Cotton or pure wool is essential. Synthetics have a very low ignition point, can melt and cause severe burns
- Long pants, long sleeve shirt or woollen jumper and a wide brimmed hat
- Leather gloves (riggers type) are essential
- Leather boots are safest, synthetic boots can melt and burn
- A wet bandana, cotton scarf or even a tea towel is an excellent mask to protect your face and respiratory system
- Safety specs or goggles are provide heat and smoke protection to your eyes

Be aware – you may need to desensitise your horse to your fire clothing ahead of time! They may not recognise you and may panic.

## Keeping Safe – Your Horse

“Naked” horses are safest. Remove all synthetic halters, fly veils, lead ropes or rugs. Rope halters burn. Do not use them or leave them on your horse:

- Leather or soaking wet canvas halters are best option but be aware buckles will get hot and may burn your horse.
- Soak your horses’ mane and tail with water. Plaiting the tail may reduce the chance of ignition.
- Drench/wet down your horse if you have to pass near or through fire.
- A soaking wet pure wool or pure cotton rug can provide some heat and burns protection for approx 2 mins
- REMOVE THE RUG BEFORE RELEASING THE HORSE IN SAFE AREA!
- Even if micro chipped, write your mobile number on the haunch of each horse with livestock crayon
- Remove iron/steel or aluminium shoes

## Confined Spaces (yards, stables etc)

Give your horse plenty of room to move. Past research and evidence suggests that horses will suffer minimal damage if given maximum space to move.

Horses will gallop along, through or around the fire front and stand on burnt ground until the fire has passed:

- **DO NOT** shut horses in small yards or stables
- **DO NOT** turn horses loose onto roads
- **DO NOT** tie your horses up to trees or fencing
- **DO NOT** attempt to outrace a fire front, whether with a float or riding your horse
- **BE AWARE** of the ambient temperature inside your float if evacuating near or around major fire fronts

## Last Minute Preparation:

- Fill all troughs, baths, tanks and metal buckets or drums with water for later use
- Turn off all electricity and gas supplies
- Disconnect electrical fences
- Remove everything off your horse, including metal shoes
- Drench horse thoroughly with water, including mane, tail and forelock
- Use a wet blanket over your horse is moving close to or through fire
- A temporary blindfold may assist in moving fractious horses however, many horses panic further when blind fold is applied – desensitise your horse to blindfolding prior to the emergency
- Move your horse to your horse safe area
- Remove all rugs, halters etc once at safe area
- Shut all gates, door and panels that lead to confine spaces such, as yards, stables or barns, as horses may run back to perceived ‘safe’ area
- Drag your Emergency Cache inside to safety

The main fire front usually passes relatively quickly, 10-20 mins for bush fire, 5-10 mins for grass fire. There is very little you can do in this time except keep safe yourself.

It is easy to think that your horse may gain confidence and remain safe if you are near them, this is not true. There is very little you can do and the sound of bushfire is deafening. Your horse may panic and bolt. Stand back and **GIVE YOUR HORSE ROOM TO RUN.**

**You need to secure your own safety.**

**Go to your previously prepared safe space inside the house or fire bunker 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.