

Animals in Emergencies: South Australian Framework Project

Animals are important in our lives: they contribute to our quality of life, well-being, livelihoods, culture and traditions. Every year, animals are injured or killed in major emergencies such as fires, floods and extreme weather. For example, in last year's Pinery bushfire in the Mid-North of South Australia over 72,000 animal lives were lost. This loss of life is tragic in itself, but it often carries a hidden cost by affecting animal owners' ability to recover emotionally and financially.

At all times the responsibility for animal welfare remains with the person in charge of the animal(s), however a range of groups can play a role in helping owners and managers exercise their responsibility for their animals, before during and after emergencies.

The *Animals in Emergencies: South Australian Framework Project* was developed to progress a range of issues relating to animal management in emergencies. These include a need for:

- better planning for animals in emergencies by owners to avoid poor last-minute decision making during emergencies (which can lead to dangerous or fatal consequences for both animals and their owners/carers)
- clarification around the roles and responsibilities of animal owners, government, and non-government organisations to manage animals during and after emergencies.
- protocols for assistance animals in emergencies.
- strategies to assist people to know how they can help with animal issues in a coordinated, safe and responsible manner.

The project does not aim to solve detailed operational problems but rather to provide a framework for planning, clarify emergency management arrangements and identify solutions to gaps in arrangements. The scope includes planning and arrangements for all types of animals in all types of emergencies with the exception of animal/plant disease (the response for which is guided by national arrangements).

A draft framework has been produced that outlines principles and long-term goals that guide planning and the South Australian arrangements for the management of animals in emergencies. The framework incorporates the *National Planning Principles for Animals in Disasters* (endorsed by the State Government in 2014).

After stakeholder review the framework will be presented to the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) for endorsement. Upon endorsement, the framework will be published and promoted to stakeholders.

An 'Implementation Plan' is also in development which outlines the strategies PIRSA will use to raise awareness of the framework and recommendations for future actions (subject to funding).

This project is a State Strategic Project endorsed by SEMC. It is funded by the Attorney Generals' Department and the South Australian State Government from the Natural Disaster Resilience Program. The Project is being undertaken within the Emergency Management Team of Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA).