

Emergency Preparation advice for alpaca owners

Emergency situations can arise without warning, and when they do, our sense of self-preservation – Fight or Flight – kicks in, and we don't always have the chance to think everything through. The purpose of an Emergency Plan is to minimise the effects of a dangerous incident and to give thought beforehand about what actions we might need to take.

When you have livestock you have the additional responsibility of making sure your animals are protected when an emergency occurs, and sometimes after the emergency is over you may have animals that require additional care. Dr Jane Vaughan has written articles specifically about caring for alpacas post flooding or bushfire: "Camelid care after floods", "Assessing and caring for alpacas after bushfires"; the Australian Alpaca Association (AAA) also has resources about bushfire preparation.

Following are a few things you can do before and during an emergency:

1. **Identify your alpacas.** Ensure their IAR tags have been inserted and ownership details in eAlpaca are up to date.
2. Prepare an **emergency plan**, and keep a copy in two places, in addition to a copy on your mobile phone. Include your contact details, herd identification, vet records, diet* and any medications. * as ruminants, a change in diet can cause an imbalance in the rumen, so a record of the usual diet is handy in an emergency.
3. Hay and supplementary feed for at least 3 days always on hand, water stored in containers. Remember that if your animals are relying solely on supplementary feed that you will need more than you would usually feed in addition to them grazing on pasture, and that if they are only eating dry feed their water intake may increase.
4. **Alpaca First Aid Kit** and any medications for 3 days. Spare halters and leads, torch, human "grab bag" including a hi-vis vest – all ready to go in your float or van. Check vehicles regularly, eg tyres pumped up, fuel tank full.
5. **Move** alpacas to your pre-determined safe place (identified in your emergency plan). This may be a day or more before danger arises. The situation can change quickly or overnight when it is difficult to move animals due to poor visibility.
6. **Stay Informed:** link social media and emergency Apps onto your phone, and have a battery-powered radio.

IF YOU NEED TO LEAVE STOCK BEHIND:

Move to allocated low grass paddock (bushfire) or high, flood-free paddock, and/or open all internal gates.

Photograph stock being left behind.

Turn off electricity at the mains.

Let neighbours know where you are going and leave contact information.

What information should you include in your Emergency Plan?

There are two types of Emergency Plan you should have for your farm property.

One should outline the Emergency Procedures you will follow in the case of an accident or other emergency on your property that involves people, and should also include how you will test these procedures and the frequency of testing, as well as how you will provide this information to any workers and/or contractors on your farm. There are a number of resources and templates that are available – check out the following websites as a start.

<https://aghealth.sydney.edu.au/resources/resources-for-farmers/>

<https://farmsafe.org.au/emergency-preparedness>

The other Emergency Plan should list the Emergency Procedures you will follow in the case of an emergency such as a Bushfire or Flood, to ensure the safety of your livestock. Depending on the size of your herd, or the type of emergency, it may not be possible to move your animals away from your property to a safe location. You should have a map of your property that shows the location of each paddock, laneway and any structures, and identify the most suitable location to place your animals in an emergency. This location may differ depending on the type of emergency. For a FIRE (including Bushfire) having a paddock with little or no grass is best, to minimise the fuel load that can burn. This paddock should have a water source that can be used to fight the fire / protect the perimeter if this becomes necessary. Remember that electricity may not be available during a fire, so consider a fire-fighting pump, and ensure that you have a supply of fuel on hand to run the pump.

In the event of a FLOOD, you should have a paddock or shelter/shed that will not go underwater. A water source that cannot be contaminated by flood water should also be available. This might be a dedicated water tank or a portable UBC that can be moved on a trailer or ute.

You need to consider where you will store emergency feed supplies to provide supplementary feed to your animals during the emergency. Some recent bushfire and flood events have lasted for several days. Also, consider what first aid supplies you might need, and have these stored in an easy to grab storage box.

You should also consider what you will do following the emergency if your paddocks are damaged and unsuitable for your animals to use.