



Dairy  
Australia  
Your Levy at Work

# Dairy Farm Fire Plan





**Australia has some of the most fire-prone regions in the world. As a dairy farmer, a fire survival plan is an essential tool to help protect your family, staff, production facilities, and livestock.**

Your plan will also help emergency service teams better understand your property.

You are encouraged to make a three-step plan based on:

**1. Preparation** – farm, stock, plant and people management

**2. Response** – putting preparation into action

**3. Recovery** – getting back to normal as soon as possible

**Have you thought about discing around the perimeter of the house and key buildings to establish a fuelbreak or planting a summer crop to use as a temporary refuge paddock?**

Dairy Australia asked farmers involved in the 2009 Gippsland/Black Saturday fires, what measures they found useful when protecting their property and stock.

One dairy farmer told us he planted 10 hectares of millet to provide summer feed for his herd.

*“I was originally going to graze this crop, but it proved its worth as a fuelbreak and helped save my machinery, sheds and 100-year-old farmhouse.”*

Another dairy farmer was able to run the disc around the main farm buildings to provide a bare soil fuelbreak.

*“Luckily, we had sufficient warning to prepare and it was the best thing we could have done. I would definitely recommend this approach to others.”*

## 1. Preparation

A key to protecting your business is to think ahead and be prepared. The following points outline lessons learned in recent fire events.

### 1. Refuge paddock:

At the start of the fire season, identify a suitable refuge paddock such as a bare paddock in the middle of your farm with good laneway access or a short summer crop (green).

Have a clear plan about how and when animals will be moved.

### 2. Remove weeds and debris:

At least once a year, tidy up by slashing and spraying along fences and disc around buildings to create a bare soil fuel break. Clear rubbish and debris regularly from around your property.

### 3. Fencing:

Fencing may be lost in a fire and it can be hard to calculate your replacement needs on the spot. You can use the mud map (overleaf) to record in advance the approximate length of fencing on your property, especially your outer perimeter.

## 4. Hay and silage management:

Make an inventory and consider the location of your hay and silage stocks. Is feed stored in more than one place on your property to reduce risk? Try to ensure the location is protected from ember attack and stored in a well-maintained shed.

Who will complete a hay and silage inventory and when?

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## 5. Machinery and chemicals inventory:

Keep an approximate inventory of your chemicals and machinery, and identify where they can be stored safely.

Who will complete a machinery and chemicals inventory and when? Photos may help.

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## 6. Water:

You will need easy access to household and stock water and a well-maintained, working petrol/diesel pump. Mark all your water source locations on the mud map overleaf.

Who will be responsible for maintaining the pump?

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## 7. Private fire-fighting equipment:

It's a good idea to test your fire-fighting equipment at the beginning of each fire season.

## 8. Power:

Outages could significantly disrupt your recovery. Your own generator or wiring ready for a generator will help keep you milking and help to maintain milk quality and cow health.

Who will be responsible for organising / maintaining a suitable generator?

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## 9. Marking the herd:

Marking the milking herd can help you sort mixed livestock ready for the first milking after a fire event.

Who will be responsible for making sure the milking herd is marked?

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## 10. Insurance:

When did you last really read and check the wording of your insurance policies – do you have sufficient cover?

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What other actions would help should you need to make a claim e.g. an inventory of valuable assets including machinery with supporting photographs?

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## 11. Shareholder/leasing agreements:

Have you discussed emergency scenarios in advance with your landowner/s to ensure everyone understands expectations and all shareholder/leasing contractual conditions around ongoing rental payments etc?

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## 12. Farm records:

Keep important farm records, contracts and documents in a safe place or together as part of your emergency relocation kit (with family documents).

## 13. Fire Danger Ratings:

During the fire season you will need to check your local warnings regularly to keep safe.

Who will be responsible for checking weather and fire warnings on a regular basis?

## 2. Response

Check fire warnings regularly and use your local knowledge and observations to assess your level of risk.

While the emergency services will do their best to provide official warnings, do not wait to receive a warning before activating your plan. Fires can threaten lives and farms within minutes. Just because you do not receive a warning does not mean there is no threat.

Make sure all staff and family members are clear about the fire survival plan and who is doing what and when - you may not always be present.

On Total Fire Ban days, the safest option is to relocate your family early in the morning or the night before. Possibly identify a nearby township as your place of relocation.

Remember, if you are located in a high fire risk area and Total Fire Ban conditions are predicted, the safest option is to move livestock offsite or to a refuge paddock early.

If your farm is impacted by any type of fire, you will need to respond extremely quickly to prevent the fire spreading.

Depending on your State, you may be legally required to control fires that start on your property so make sure your fire-fighting equipment is maintained and regularly checked.

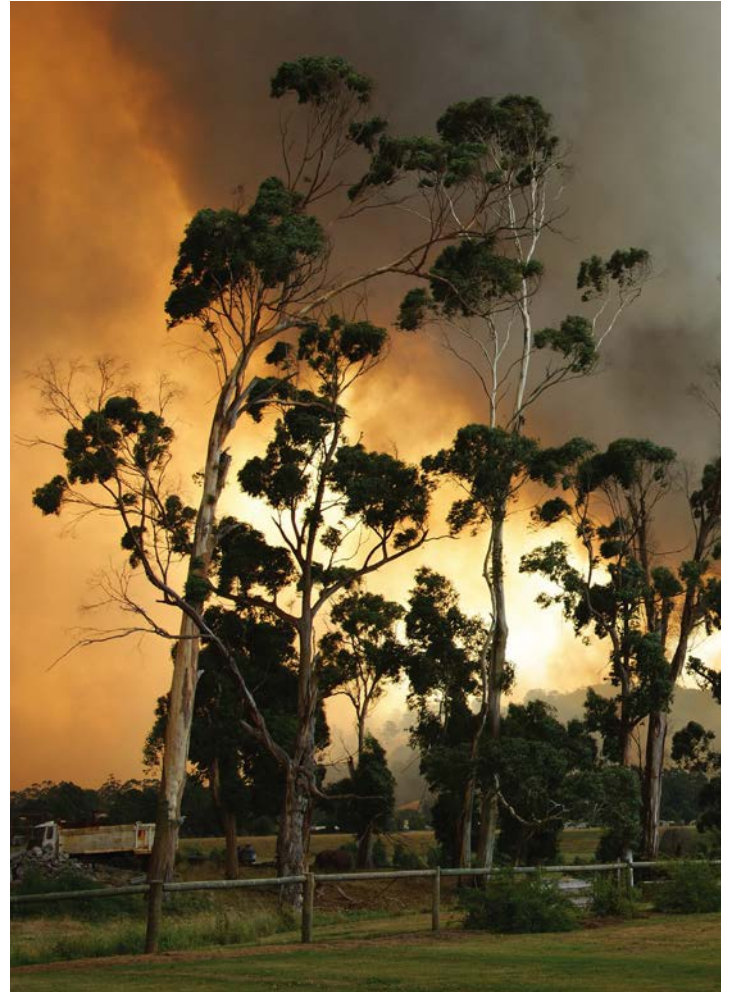
## 3. Recovery

With good planning and preparation comes better recovery. Factors to consider for a swift return to business include

- Welfare of people – fire events can be physically and emotionally challenging
- Stock management – including animal health, welfare, feed and water
- Milking and cooling – power alternatives in a prolonged outage
- Fencing – safe containment of stock
- Land and pasture management – including resowing and weed management
- Insurance – photographs can help provide evidence of damage.

## Are you up to date with the rules around fire and Total Fire Ban days in your State? Rules can include:

- Not operating welders or grinders on Total Fire Ban days
- Having machinery fitted with working, maintained and appropriate spark arrestors (except if with a turbo charger or an aspirated exhaust air cleaner)
- Having a working nine-litre water extinguisher on tractors and machinery and
- Reporting fires that have started on your property by calling Triple Zero.



Further information can be found at:

[www.dairyaustralia.com.au/bushfire](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/bushfire)

Search 'bushfire' and 'preparing for emergencies' at:

[www.peopleindairy.org.au](http://www.peopleindairy.org.au)



## Farm Emergency Contact Information

Farm name:

Address:

**Home** Phone: Mobile: Pager:

**Spouse** Work: Mobile:

**Children** Name: Contact No:

Name: Contact No:

Name: Contact No:

**Employee** Name: Contact No:

Name: Contact No:

Name: Contact No:

**Neighbour** Name: Contact No:

Name: Contact No:

Name: Contact No:

Fire station: SES: Police station:

Hospital/family doctor:

**Emergency meeting location:**

**Milk company representative:** Contact No:

**Livestock transport:** Contact No:

**Shire Council:** Contact No:

**Feed supplier:** Contact No:

**Electrician:** Contact No:

**Veterinarian:** Contact No:

**Plant supplier:** Contact No:


**Fuel and chemical supplier:** Contact No:

**Equipment dealer:** Contact No:

**Insurance agent:** Contact No:

**Farmers' organisation:** Contact No:





**A key to protecting your business is to think ahead and be prepared.**

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