Quick Guide

Australian Government
National Emergency Management Agency

Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience

Why do we need to plan for animals?

Speed read

- During a disaster, humans and animals are impacted in various ways.
- The bond between human and animals during a disaster can create additional complexities and risks. This is because it can affect how people behave.
- Risks will be different for every different human/animal interaction. This is why planning and preparedness for animals is vital.
- Emergency planning must consider the human-animal bond before, during and after disaster to support the safety and wellbeing of both people and animals.

Key points

The significance of animals in Australia:

- Approximately 69% of Australian households have a pet (companion animal). Humans may gain companionship, emotional support, identity, physical independence and a sense of purpose from their relationship with animals.
- Assistance animals provide vital services and support to people living with disability. They are required by law to be planned for to ensure they remain with to remain with the human they support during a disaster event.
- The agricultural sector is a significant contributor to food security and the economy.
- Many people rely on animals for their income and employment in animal-related industries such as veterinary, zoo, agriculture, forestry and fisheries. This financial dependency may affect the way each person or organisation plans for emergency.
- Animals have significant spiritual and cultural values, particularly to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Cultural significance of animals in society is an essential part of history, culture, tradition and folklore of every culture. Their aesthetic values and spiritual roles may also provide comfort and inspiration of every culture.
- Native wildlife is critical for healthy ecosystems and biodiversity. Wildlife also has an intrinsic value to shared human and animal spaces by providing safe and enjoyable areas such as nationals parks or rivers.

This significance means many Australians need to consider animals during disasters.

The human-animal bond refers to the different types of relationships humans and animals have which is influenced by the varying attachment to and dependence humans have to animals.

The human-animal bond in emergencies effects the way people behave during emergencies. People may refuse to evacuate without their animals or put their life at risk to save animals.

Planning for animals supports the safety and wellbeing of both people and animals during and after a disaster.

Supporting human-animal bonds during disasters can help alleviate the emotional distress that both animals and their custodians may experience, leading to better welfare during hazardous events.

This brief is part of the quick guide series produced by the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR). Quick guides for other handbooks in the collection can be found on the knowledge hub:: knowledge.aidr.org.au

+61 3 9419 2388
enquiries@aidr.org.au
www.aidr.org.au
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Take action

- Watch the Planning for Animals Showcase Webinar to hear about why planning for animals is important for different sectors.
- Write down some of the different reasons why animal emergency management is important to you and your role.
- Consider the different ways animals might be valued in your local area.
- If you are developing a local emergency plan, write a list of different animal related organisations or businesses you may need to speak to.
- What wildlife in your local areas are the most vulnerable to disasters? Think about what you could do to reduce their vulnerability.

More information

- Planning for Animals (AIDR 2024)
- Evacuation Planning, Chapter 3 (AIDR 2023)
- Emergency Planning (AIDR 2020)
- Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience (AIDR 2020)
- Gender and Emergency Management Guidelines (Gender and Disaster Australia, 2023)
- Public Information and Warnings (AIDR 2021)

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