

# Wildlife and fire response

## Fact sheet for veterinarians and veterinary nurses 2019/20

### Introduction

The Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP) is the lead agency for managing wildlife welfare arising from bushfire.

Where required, DELWP will instigate a response that will be integrated into the Incident Management Team (IMT) established to manage the fire incident.

Initially, the wildlife response will consist of teams of DELWP and other agency staff, sometimes supported by trained volunteers, in undertaking assessment of wildlife on the fire ground. These teams will assess wildlife for injuries.

Injured wildlife will either be monitored, euthanised or, if practical and safe to do so, captured for further assessment by a veterinarian.

Only in certain situations, and where approved by the Incident Controller, will veterinary activities be undertaken on the fire ground.

### Provision of veterinary services

Where DELWP determines that veterinary support is required, it can occur one of two ways – utilising local veterinary services and facilities or through the establishment of a triage centre.

Where there is only a small number of animals affected, and local veterinary services have capacity to support the response, DELWP will seek to enter a contract arrangement for veterinary services.

During a larger event where there are a significant number of wildlife requiring triage, or where there is impact to the surrounding community meaning that local veterinary services are busy, DELWP will establish and run a triage centre. In this situation DELWP will seek veterinarians to staff the triage centre through the Australian Veterinary Association Victorian Division (AVA).

### Payment

Veterinarians will be paid for their services where they have been formally deployed to an emergency response incident or an IMT has requested veterinary

services through a local clinic. Payment will be for their time and consumables (where services are provided within their clinic).

Where a triage centre has been established, veterinary nurses may also be required. These roles will also be paid positions.

DELWP has adopted the following rates which are consistent with the rates agreed between the AVA and the Commonwealth Government for emergency response activities. These are outlined below:

Item	Rate
Veterinary services	\$190.80/hour
Travel	\$0.68/km
Consumables (including drugs)	At cost
Veterinary nurses	\$40/hour

### Method of engagement

Veterinarians or veterinary clinics will be engaged by the Logistics team of the IMT. This will be formally requested by either receipt of a signed purchase order form or by a standard contract.

### Provision of clinic-based services

If a small number of animals are impacted, DELWP may approach a local veterinary practice to provide in clinic assessment for a small number of animals.

This would be limited to triage of affected animals and short-term care before the animals are released to the wild or DELWP arranges transfer to wildlife carers for rehabilitation. Euthanasia of animals may also be required.

DELWP will provide a copy of its response plan which provides guidelines and veterinary advice on the assessment and treatment of burnt wildlife, as well as the framework for consideration of euthanasia.

# Wildlife and fire response

## Triage centres

Where required, DELWP will establish a triage centre at a facility close to the fire ground, but away from any fire operations. This may be a local hall or sports ground.

It will be equipped with veterinary supplies that DELWP has in store for these types of events. This will include relevant drugs and equipment including an anaesthetic machine.

## Deployment

If you have been asked to work at a triage centre, you will be part of the wider IMT. Work will be undertaken in set shifts and you will be supported by a triage coordinator.

Each shift will commence with a briefing by the triage coordinator of the incident, objectives for that shift, safety information as well as any other information that is required.

If you are taking over from another veterinarian, they will undertake a handover prior to departure.

## Length of deployment

Where individuals are nominating to be working at a triage centre, deployment will be of up to 5 days in length. This is consistent with other roles being undertaken as part of the response. This also ensures for a continuity of care for wildlife within the triage centre as well as the appropriate management of scheduled drugs.

## Meals and accommodation

The IMT will arrange meals during deployments. Accommodation will be provided for the duration of your deployment if required at no cost to the veterinarian or veterinary nurse. This may include camp accommodation.

## Safety first

Veterinarians and veterinary nurses deployed to wildlife emergencies are required to work within established emergency management structures which include

registration, communication and reporting procedures, as well as the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and the adoption of hazard specific safety measures where appropriate.

## What is not permitted?

As a member of the response team, you must not do the following:

- be engaged in fire suppression activities, or operate in proximity to an active fire
- drive agency vehicles
- undertake tree climbing activities
- engage with the media whilst deployed (unless approved by the Incident Controller).

## How do I get deployed?

If the Incident Controller (IC) approves the use of local veterinary services, the IMT will contact you to seek your capacity to assist.

Where a triage centre is to be established DELWP will contact the AVA and provide them with the relevant details. AVA will then communicate this with its members and seek nominations which will be provided to DELWP. You will then be contacted directly to discuss details of the deployment including location, length of deployment and contract details.

## More information

For more information about wildlife response during emergencies or wildlife rehabilitation, please visit [www.wildlife.vic.gov.au](http://www.wildlife.vic.gov.au).

AVA (Victorian Division) can be contacted on (03) 9600 2930 or 0418 990 338.

© The State of Victoria Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning 2019



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence. You are free to re-use the work under that licence, on the condition that you credit the State of Victoria as author. The licence does not apply to any images, photographs or branding, including the Victorian Coat of Arms, the Victorian Government logo and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) logo. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

### Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

## Accessibility

If you would like to receive this publication in an alternative format, please telephone the DELWP Customer Service Centre on 136186, email [customer.service@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:customer.service@delwp.vic.gov.au) or via the National Relay Service on 133 677 [www.relayservice.com.au](http://www.relayservice.com.au). This document is also available on the internet at [www.delwp.vic.gov.au](http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au).