

Farm Biosecurity in the event of a natural disaster



GRAINS FARM
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PROGRAM

The landholder

Key disasters for farmers include flood, fire and wind events of immediate impact on the land, while over time a drought can develop to the point that there is a need to bring in feed or move stock from the property for sale or agistment.

Disaster management for events likely to adversely impact the operations of your property, should be built into your farm plan.

First priority is keeping people safe, followed by the welfare of pets and livestock, and then protecting your property. Biosecurity needs may not be considered as a key priority in the event of an emergency.

A plan to prepare, respond, and recover from a natural disaster is important, and can be built into your farm's **Biosecurity Plan**. The plan should be regularly reviewed and discussed with family members and staff who work on the property to ensure there is a clear understanding of what to do in an emergency.

When is biosecurity important?

Biosecurity comes into play in the recovery phase, after the emergency is over. Although modern transport systems can facilitate rapid recovery of essential supplies to properties affected by natural disasters, such emergency aid can bring potential risks to the property. The last thing you want is to introduce a biosecurity risk while recovering from an emergency.

Depending on the nature of the emergency, biosecurity issues are likely to arise. For example, in a flood or major wind event, pests can be transported onto a property from another area. This can be on plant material, soil or animals. A fire or earthquake will have different associated risks.

Livestock needs

It is critical that nutritious feed is provided to livestock in flood, fire and drought affected areas. However, these situations may compromise the availability and quality of feed, so you may need to organise emergency fodder for your livestock. State and territory agencies, in conjunction with state farming groups, may coordinate the distribution of emergency fodder after a natural disaster or when going through drought. However, the welfare of livestock remains the responsibility of the livestock owner or their nominated representative.



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Natural disasters such as bushfire or flood can make a farm open to the risk of a biosecurity problem afterwards.



Bushfire may mean the loss of valuable feed for stock.

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Sourcing emergency fodder requires some consideration. There are risks associated with bringing donated or purchased feed onto the property. This could include chemical or weed seed contamination, restricted animal material, and poor quality or unsuitable feed for your class of livestock. Feeding out to livestock is best conducted in a designated place or places that can be frequently inspected for pests or weeds, helping to limit their spread.

Where possible, keep a record of where feed brought onto the property originated from and which animals it was fed to. Feeding water-damaged hay and silage requires some caution. Wet fodder can develop mould and has reduced nutritional value. In some cases it can even be toxic.

The removal of livestock off the property or affected areas may be required for a period of time. This means plans for where to agist, feedlotting or sale may be required.

The responders

Organisations and service providers responding to disasters need to recognise the potential risks posed by recovery efforts. Introducing a new pest onto the property is the most obvious risk. Such pests may then be difficult and costly to eradicate, adding to financial burdens.

In emergency situations responders may not consider biosecurity risks or deem them non-essential. However, responders should make biosecurity screening part of their operational plans to prevent unintended long-term consequences for the property owner if possible. Transporting emergency relief goods may increase the risk of spreading pests. To address this, responders need to put procedures in place to protect farm biosecurity.

Things to consider

- Landholders need to consider and build disaster management strategies into their property plan.
- Where possible, try to keep donated livestock feed separate from normal feed.
- Inspect donated feed for pests and diseases at a designated location before delivery or collection.
- Keep a record of where feed supplies are going or who collected them, to assist in tracing the source.



Floods can bring pests onto a property while ruining existing feed to livestock.



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While causing erosion to the landscape, flood can also pose a biosecurity risk by washing in pests from properties further up the catchment.

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Records of emergency feed supplies going out to landholders should be kept in a register by those organising relief.



Emergency feed brought on to the property should be inspected for its suitability for use and to see if it contains any pest or weed seeds.



Emergency feed brought onto the farm should be inspected first for likely pests and quality issues before being fed out in areas that can be checked by the landholder over the time for any pest problems.

Useful resources

<https://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/dont-let-yourself-be-burned-following-a-disaster/>

<https://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/safeguarding-your-stock-before-and-after-a-natural-disaster/>

<https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/emergency-management>

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If you see anything unusual, call the **Exotic Plant Pest Hotline** on **1800 084 881**.

**EXOTIC PLANT
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1800 084 881**