16.01 Animals and Wildlife SOP

Section 1 - Purpose and Objectives

(1) This SOP defines CFA capabilities and notification requirements upon identifying animal and/or wildlife welfare concerns during emergency operations and non emergency/CFA activities.

(2) To provide sufficient guidance to minimise risks to the health and safety of CFA members where there are identified animal and/or wildlife welfare concerns.

Section 2 - Scope

(3) This policy applies to all CFA members.

Section 3 - Procedure

Control Agency for Animal and/or Wildlife Welfare Concerns

(4) Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) is the control agency for animal related emergencies specifically:

    a. Agriculture Victoria (AgVic) – animals (livestock and companion)
    b. Fire Forest Management Victoria (FFMVic) – all other animals

Considerations

(5) CFA members should conduct ongoing Dynamic Risk Assessments where animals and/or wildlife are suspected or present during operations.

(6) The welfare of an animal is the responsibility of the person or persons in charge of that animal, but agencies and organisations may assist farmers/animal owners where practicable and safe to do so. CFA members should only assist when:

    a. aiding the animal/s does not hinder response to an emergency; and
    b. members have undertaken a dynamic risk assessment and any risks mitigated.

(7) Where there are suspected or known animal, plant, or pest biosecurity risks refer to 10.08 [Animal, Plant or Pest Biosecurity Emergency](#) SOP.

(8) If CFA members are concerned about potential impact of firefighting foams and retardants on habitat or water run-offs, refer to 9.07 Firefighting Foams and Retardants SOP.

Actions During Emergencies

(9) In an emergency, DEECA will lead and manage all welfare assessments, triage activities, or where

required, humane euthanasia of wildlife impacted.

(10) CFA members should identify animal and wildlife welfare concerns in any incident impact assessment activities.

(11) Upon discovery of animal and wildlife welfare concerns during an emergency:

   a. CFA members should notify the next in charge/Incident Controller of the welfare concerns and location;

   b. the Incident Controller may seek advice from the District Duty Officer/State Duty Officer/State Agency Commander.

> DEECA will coordinate the required agencies and organisations with animal/wildlife emergency responsibilities to deliver animal welfare support services during emergencies (e.g councils, RSPCA, authorised carers/rescuers, DEECA rescue teams).

(12) If CFA members discover animals likely to be harmed or killed by fire (e.g. tied up, left unattended in a car or stables, huddled in paddock corner) reasonable steps should be taken, where apropriate, to minimise harm.

(13) As per Section 30(1)(d) of the Country Fire Authority Act 1958, fences may be removed or destroyed to protect life. When fences need cutting in the interest of animal and/or wildlife welfare, avoid cutting fences close to roads to limit risk to road users.

(14) Animal and wildlife welfare providers or other members of the public are not permitted to enter an active fire ground without approval from the Incident Controller.

(15) If members of the public discover injured or displaced wildlife due to fire, CFA members should direct them to contact Wildlife Victoria or DEECA via the Wildlife Emergency app or by phone.

Actions During CFA Activities (Rescue and Non-Emergencies)

(16) Upon discovery of animal and/or wildlife welfare concerns during a non-emergency activity, CFA members should notify and request advice from the next in charge or Incident Controller.

(17) For animals and/or wildlife unlawfully/accidentally entrapped or needing removal from infrastructure or properties (whether public or CFA owned), CFA members should contact the appropriate local animal and wildlife welfare provider and/or rescuer.

Post-Incident Response

(18) Where operations have utilised water typically used for stock or wildlife purposes, refer to 07.05 Water Supplies For Firefighting SOP.

Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Incident Controller	Determine with DEECA/Incident Emergency Management Team when a Wildlife Response Plan is to be developed. Oversee the delivery of an activated Wildlife Response Plan. Obtain and disseminate appropriate advice to CFA members for animal and wildlife welfare cases. Oversee all those entering or accessing the fireground are authorised or permitted to do so in the interest of animal or wildlife welfare. Oversee the safety of all emergency personnel.
District Duty Officer/State Duty Officer	Notify and liaise with the relevant DEECA personnel upon notification of animal and/or wildlife welfare concerns. Provide advice to the Incident Controller.

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Page 2 of 5

Role	Responsibilities
CFA Members	Report any animal and wildlife welfare needs or concerns through their chain of command. Treat safety of themselves and those around them as paramount.
Crew Leader / Strike Team Leader	Oversee the safety of CFA members when there are wildlife and/or animal welfare concerns. Liaise with local animal and wildlife welfare providers and relevant council contacts when operationally practicable.

Safety Note

(19) Finding impacted animls and/orwildlife can be distressing and can also pose a risk to CFA member's health and safety. CFA members impacted by operations involving injured, distressed or deceased animals should contact the CFA Wellbeing Support Line on 1800 959 232.

(20) If contact with animals or wildlife occurs, CFA members should carry out appropriate hygiene and decontamination processes and/or seek advice if necessary.

(21) Any safety incidents or hazards that impact CFA members should be reported in CFASafe.

Environmental Note

(22) Nil.

Section 4 - Definitions

(23) Commonly defined terms are located in the CFA centralised glossary. Document-specific definitions are listed below.

Animal	1. any live member of a vertebrate species (other than human) and some crustaceans; 2. livestock (including cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry, ratites, buffalo, camels, alpacas, goats, deer and horses); and 3. companion animal (pet or other domestic animal).
Wildlife	1. any vertebrate animal indigenous to Australia, some non-indigenous vertebrates (deer and game birds declared to be wildlife under the Wildlife Act 1975); 2. any terrestrial invertebrates listed as threatened under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act, 1988; and 3. does not include fish within the meaning of the Fisheries Act, 1995.

Section 5 - Related Documents

(24) Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Plan (2024)

(25) Victorian response plan for wildlife impacted by fire (2021)

(26) Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) Large Animal Rescue Operations.

(27) Environment Policy

(28) 16.00 Environmental Care SO

(29) 7.05 Water Supplies For Firefighting SOP

(30) 14.02 Welfare Services - Activation Of SOP

(31) 14.06 Notification of Injuries and Fatalities SOP

(32) J08.02 - Dynamic Risk Assessment

Status and Details

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Accountable Officer	Jason Heffernan Chief Officer
Responsible Officer	Garry Cook Deputy Chief Officer Operational Response & Coordination
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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"CFA member" - Refers to all CFA volunteers, volunteer auxiliary workers, officers, employees and secondees.

"Next in Charge" - Next in Charge - the supervisor or manager directly in charge of a CFA member or Labour Hire Contractor e.g. for a volunteer this would be a Lieutenant, Captain, Deputy Group Officer, Group Officer or Commander; for an employee / labour hire contractor this would be their direct manager.

"Dynamic Risk Assessment" - The continuous assessment and control of risk in the rapidly changing circumstances of an operational incident. DRA is an intuitive thought process and is typically not recorded.

"Firefighting foams" - Refer to Class A and Class B foam.

"Retardant" - A chemical generally mixed with water designed to retard combustion.

"CFASafe" - CFASafe is a electronic system that is used to report health and safety incidents, hazards and near miss for CFA members, contractors and visitors.

"Wildlife Victoria" - Wildlife Victoria is a non-profit charity that operates a wildlife rescue service in Victoria.

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Page 5 of 5