


# Promoting community resilience through connection to animals

BNHCRC Research Forum  
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**MACQUARIE**  
University



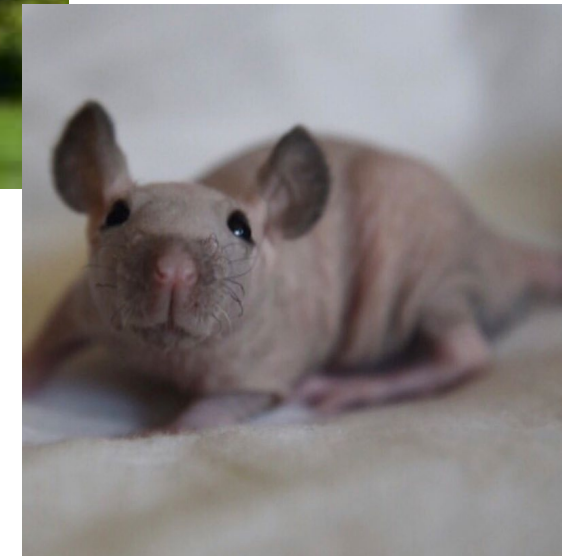
bushfire&natural  
**HAZARDS**CRC



Australian Government  
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Centres Programme

Have you ever talked to someone about their animals?



# Pets in people's lives

A critical piece in the resilience narrative

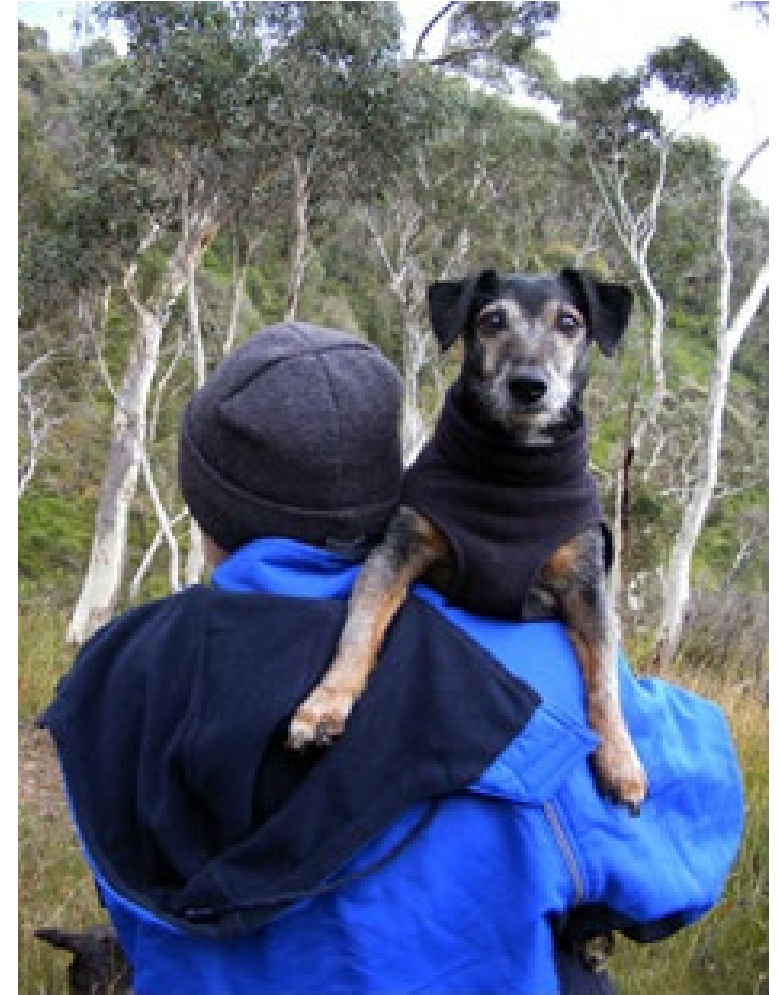
- Australia has one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world
- People form close bonds with their pets; meaning they play an important psychosocial role in our lives
- Multiple studies have shown health and wellbeing effects of pet ownership



# Pets in people's lives

A critical piece in the resilience narrative

- Companion animals are often considered family members providing comfort and affection, routine and stability
- Recent research (McConnell et al, 2019) indicates that people who consider pets as part of the family (social ingroup) “enhances their perceived ability to provide social support to owners, which in turn promotes wellbeing”
- Understanding human-animal relationships is “a critical element in promoting the resilience of individuals and communities” (Hall et al. 2004)



# Pets in people's lives

A critical piece in the resilience narrative

- Animal ownership promotes community connectedness
- High social capital – dog walkers
- Pets are great levelers in society
- Having something in common with others



Lisa Woods (UWA) The Conversation June 28 2017 <https://theconversation.com/our-pets-strengthen-neighbourhood-ties-79755>



Dog owners were five times more likely to have got to know people in their neighbourhood....

# Impact of animal loss

Vulnerabilities and disenfranchised grief

- Pet loss equated to loss of a sibling (Stokes et al, 2002)
- Grief resulting from animal loss is often diminished or ignored (disenfranchised)
- Lack of ritual



Memorial to animals lost in the bushfire in Winmalee, Blue Mountains, 2013

# Impact of animal loss in emergencies

Vulnerabilities and disenfranchised grief

- In emergencies animal ownership is associated with:
  - failure to evacuate
  - undertaking risky behavior to rescue animals
- Loss of a pet is associated with poor well-being and mental health outcomes
- Animal loss can mean a loss of social connection, a loss of routine



# Impact of animal loss in emergencies

Research evidence

- International research:
  - Hurricane Katrina – pet loss linked to significantly higher levels of acute stress, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (Hunt, Al-Awadi and Johnson, 2008)
  - Similar findings in Japan (Goto et al. 2006) and New Zealand
  - Coombs et al. 2015 found that companion dogs influenced human health and well-being during and after the Christchurch earthquakes
- Little research in Australia on the roles animals play in the recovery phase

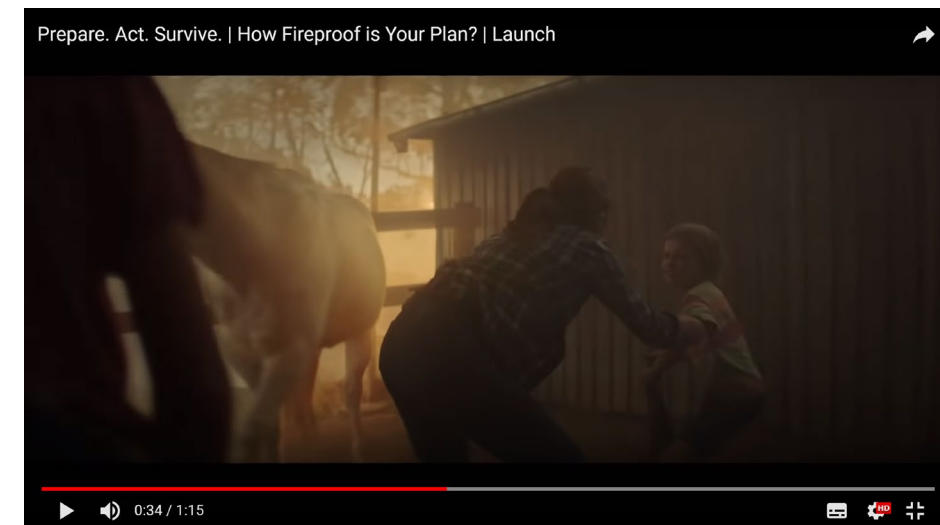




# Emergency preparedness – Engagement with animal owners

Animal ownership is a great motivator for emergency preparedness

- The idea of engaging animal owners in bushfire preparedness through their bond with their animals is not new
- Approach developed further through BNHCRC research project ‘Managing Animals in Disasters’ (MAiD)
- Blue ARC and new ‘Animal Ready Community’ projects



How Fireproof is your plan? NSW RFS 2018.  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/NSWRFS>

# Blue ARC – Animal Ready Community

Community-led action

- Community-led group in the Blue Mountains
- The aim of Blue ARC is to support community resilience in emergency events through better awareness, preparedness, planning and response for companion animals, livestock, and native wildlife
- Developed resources, training, run social media page, connect with official emergency management structures through Resilience and Preparedness Working Group



NSW Resilient Australia Awards 2018  
Highly Commended – Community Award

# Blue ARC



**Are you ready?**  
**Make a plan for ALL your family**

## Keeping Your Animals Safe in an Emergency

in the Blue Mountains region



### Keeping your horse safe in an emergency

#### Evacuation Kit for Horses\*

- Feed for at least 3 days, including any special dietary needs
- Water, minimum 5-10L/horse for evacuation (average requirement is 30-50L/day)
- Halters, leads, rug and other required saddlery
- Medications & applicators
- Documentation & photographs
- First aid kit
- Bucket
- Wool blankets & towels (burn/ember protection)
- Wire cutters and a sharp knife
- Torch

\*NSW DPI Horse Safety in Disasters Fact Sheet



#### Kennels & Catteries

It is important to contact kennels, catteries & vet clinics well before the time you may need them to discuss vaccination requirements, boarding fees etc.

All cats and dogs housed in boarding facilities must have been vaccinated in the previous 12 months. It is important they are fully vaccinated well ahead of the boarding period.

#### What to take with you:

- Proof of vaccination
- Information about any health or behavioural issues your animals may have.
- Medication to be administered and details of the dose, frequency and name of medication. If your animals are on long term medication, make sure to bring along extra just in case.
- Contact details of your vet
- Food, if on a special diet.



Blue ARC Animal Ready Community is a Blue Mountains based group which aims to improve community awareness of the need for companion animals, livestock and native wildlife to be included in local emergency preparedness, planning and response.



To contact Blue ARC:

Facebook: [facebook.com/groups/7045349658940536](https://www.facebook.com/groups/7045349658940536)  
 Email: [jennybigelow@yahoo.com.au](mailto:jennybigelow@yahoo.com.au)

### Boarding for Animals in the Blue Mountains & Surrounding Areas

This publication contains general information only and should not be construed as advice. It does not take into account individual circumstances. Blue ARC cannot recommend, guarantee or endorse any of the facilities named for the purposes of these facilities. Whilst we try to ensure the accuracy of the information we accept no responsibility for the accuracy or content of the information. We should do your own research when seeking accommodation for your pet(s). Please refer to the information on our website for Blue ARC exclusions to the nearest facility providing all facility information for any loss or damage arising out of the use of this information.



# PLANNING FOR ANIMALS IN EMERGENCIES SEMINAR

MAKE A PLAN. PREPARE A KIT. BE INFORMED.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6TH

SPRINGWOOD SPORTS CLUB,  
 83 MACQUARIE RD, SPRINGWOOD

OPENS AT 9.30AM FOR A 10AM START

#### PROGRAM\*

10 - 10.50am	<b>Household &amp; Property Preparedness</b> Michael Biber, SES; representatives from RFS & Red Cross
10.50 - 11.10am	Morning tea
11.10 - 12pm	<b>Managing Domestic Pets in Emergencies</b> Dr Robert Johnson, South Penrith Vet Clinic; representative from DPI
12 - 12.30pm	<b>Assisting Injured &amp; Displaced Wildlife</b> Greg Keightley, wildlife carer
12.30 - 1pm	Lunch break
1 - 1.30pm	<b>Emergency First Aid for Domestic Pets</b> Caroline Outred, VN, Richmond TAFE
1.30 - 3pm	<b>Managing Large Animals in Emergencies</b> Dr Christine Smith, Agnes Banks Equine Clinic; Misty Stebbing, Equine Disaster Coordinator; representative from RFS

\*Program may be subject to change

#### COST: gold coin donation

Come for the day, or drop in for individual sessions.  
 Morning tea provided. Lunch can be purchased at the club.

#### TO REGISTER OR MAKE ENQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT:

Blue ARC  
 Facebook: search Blue ARC;  
 Email: [jennybigelow@yahoo.com.au](mailto:jennybigelow@yahoo.com.au)  
 Winmalee Neighbourhood Centre  
 Ph: (02) 4754 4050

Early registrations would be appreciated for numbers.

#### PROUDLY BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



Blue ARC Facebook



# Hawkesbury-Nepean Animal Ready Community

Large Animal Focus

- Funded by the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Flood Risk Management Strategy
- Working group - INSW-led, with support from NSW SES, NSW DPI, GS LLS, BNHCRC, Local Equine Veterinarian, Local Council, NSW RFS, Blue ARC



# HNV ARC – Horse Care & Safety Open Day

- Mix of stalls and events in arena.
- Focus on care of horses and horse behaviour – with consistent emergency preparedness messages



- Evaluation

- 58% had emergency plan that included horses
- Issues for relocation – where to go, how to move horses
- What to do if not home

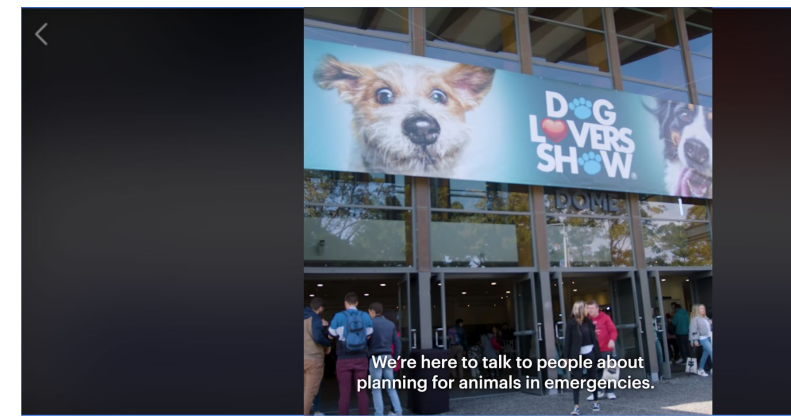


*"[Bushfire prone horse owners] you can ring those mates and say, "can you come up and help me move my horses down to your place, down in the lowlands?" Or conversely, you may get a flood warning.. But wouldn't it be nice to know you've got some friends who live up there - Kurrajong, Kurrajong Heights, ...all that area is nice and high and dry. That I could take my horses up to your place." David King, NSW SES*

# NSW SES Project 'Ohana'

All animals – Network Focus

- Community Resilience and Innovation Program (CRIP)-funded grant
- Led by Sue Pritchard, NSW SES. Supported by NSW DPI (Leeane Raines), BNHCRC, Local Councils, NSW RFS
- Developing messaging and behavioural strategy (with The Behavioural Architects)
- Next steps...



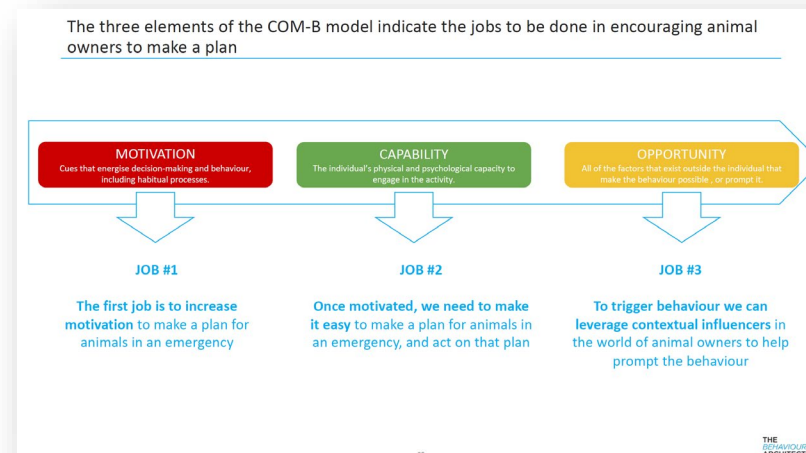
SES Dog Lovers Show

Like Comment



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49K Views · about a week ago



# 'Ohana' – Encouraging building an ARC

- Engaged high level stakeholder groups, helping to co-develop a resource kit to use, to help them build resilience
- Leveraging networks such as pony clubs, breeders, fancier groups and associations to establish their own Animal Ready Community
- Resource kit could include
  - Pet Emergency Plan template
  - Pet Chat Talking Points
  - How to build an ARC
  - Link to Get Ready Animals Website
  - Magazine Article for their newsletters
  - Video Testimonials

## Building an ARC (Animal Ready Community)

### Why build an ARC?

As an organisation where animals are a focus, having a plan for emergencies where you have an existing network that can readily support each other makes good sense.

Establishing an *Animal Ready Community* (ARC) within your organisation involves identifying resources and goodwill from within your membership to prepare ahead of time and developing agreed arrangements to support each other quickly and effectively in times of need.

### What's your plan?

It's important for members to first develop individual plans for their own household/facility. This

# How to support resilience

Final reflections

- Significance of the human-animal bond
  - vulnerabilities and strengths
- Raise awareness, identify gaps/issues, open up discussions
- Locally-relevant discussions and identification of solutions
  - Community – Emergency Management
  - Use animal-related groups and organisations (specialist knowledge and support)
- Compassion in communication post event, e.g. ‘No lives lost’ messages, acknowledgement of animal losses beyond production animals





# Thank you – from Team Taylor!



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