

OPERATIONAL BRIEF

NSW RFS DROUGHT INITIATIVES

September 2018

The NSW RFS is providing assistance to rural and regional communities during continued drought conditions. It's important that members understand the measures being undertaken to provide reasonable assistance.

The NSW RFS has been working with the Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) to investigate ways in which the Service can further assist rural and regional communities during continued drought conditions.

For further advice on these initiatives please contact your local District Office.

Fire permits for deceased livestock

Due to the current drought conditions, many farmers have had to make the difficult decision to destroy stock, or deal with deceased animals. The improper disposal of deceased livestock can have a significant impact on the environment, such as soil and water contamination. It can also lead to disease being spread through other animals.

The NSW DPI recommends the disposal of deceased livestock as soon as possible after the livestock has died. Careful planning and disposal of the livestock is important to ensuring the ongoing safety of the remaining stock, alleviating public health risks or adverse publicity.

In many cases, burning deceased livestock may be the most appropriate method of destruction.

To assist landholders, the NSW RFS has developed a Special Fire Permit. The permit operates in a similar way to a normal fire permit but has the following features:

- Where an exemption has been approved by the Commissioner, the permit is not suspended or cancelled on days of Total Fire Ban;

- The time required to notify the local Fire Control Centre and the permit holder's neighbours of the use of the Permit prior to lighting, has been reduced from 24 hours to one hour;
- The issuing of the permit by a Permit Issuing Officer cannot be reasonably refused, even when other permits in the district have been suspended;
- The permit can only be used for a time period up to 72 hours, from the date and time of permit issue by the Permit Issuing Officer.


The NSW RFS has developed a Service Standard detailing further information about the Fire Permit (Live Stock Destruction) and will release more information about this initiative in the coming weeks.

Water cartage

The NSW RFS has been in regular discussion with NSW DPI regarding the potential for assistance with water carting for drought-affected communities.

It is important to note that fire trucks used by NSW RFS are not considered safe for cartage of potable water due to the potential for water contamination. Water contamination typically comes from the use of foams or where the brigade has sourced water from a dam, river or other water source that was not typically for drinking.

However the use of NSW RFS fire trucks has been identified as an option for the cartage of water for the purpose animal welfare, such as stock water.



The NSW RFS has considered this opportunity, while balancing the need to ensure we maintain fire services to local communities, and recognising that many of our own members have been impacted by the drought.

NSW DPI is coordinating the drought response in conjunction with the Commonwealth Government and other partner agencies such as Local Land Services (LLS) who continue to monitor animal welfare issues and conditions on the ground.

To ensure consistency and proper coordination, the NSW RFS will only cart water to individual landholders where specifically requested to do so by NSW DPI. This will ensure that landholders receive the service they need, while also limiting the potential misuse of NSW RFS resources and members.

Financial assistance for rural communities

Through the recently announced Furies For Farmers initiative, the NSW RFS is encouraging members to donate to the NSW Farmers Drought Relief Fund.

The Fund provides vouchers and gift cards for drought-affected farmers to use in their local communities. This ensures donations go to those who need it, and purchases assist the area they live in.

If you can, you're encouraged to donate at www.nswfarmers.org.au/donate. A number of brigades are also conducting fundraising activities as part of Get Ready Weekend on 22-23 September.

Key points

- To support farmers, the NSW RFS is introducing a new Special Fire Permit which allows landholders to destroy deceased livestock easily.
- NSW RFS tankers are only to be used for carting stock water to landholders where there's been a request from the Department of Primary Industries.
- NSW RFS members are encouraged to support the Furies For Farmers initiative, including fundraising for the NSW Farmers Drought Relief Fund.

Message of the Month: September

To help brigades and districts share messages with their community, we've prepared [a fact sheet of key messages for the month](#).

These messages include Get Ready Weekend, the bush fire season, season outlook and fire permits.

Current advertising across the state is promoting Get Ready Weekend on 22-23 September.

Keep an eye out as the new Prepare Act Survive campaign will commence in the coming weeks.

Rob Rogers AFSM

Deputy Commissioner