

Emergency Preparedness Guideline for the Commercial Animal Management Industry

Introduction

This guideline is intended to provide information and guidance to owners/providers in the commercial animal management industry in Brisbane, who wish to produce their own emergency plans, particularly in relation to evacuation planning. Providers include but are not limited to:

- Zoos
- Commercial Stables
- Animal re-homing centres
- Wildlife Demonstrators
- Pet shops
- Boarding Kennels/Catteries

Recent events have highlighted the importance of having a plan in times of disaster. Your best defense in a disaster situation is being well organised, knowing your needs and having a strategy in place.

The Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry also highlighted the need for a disaster management plan recommending that animal re-homing centres, zoos, stables and similar facilities should develop plans for evacuating or arranging for the care of animals.

This guideline has been produced by Brisbane City Council (Council) in partnership with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) Queensland.

How to use this guideline and template

This emergency preparedness guideline provides suggested inclusions for a disaster management plan. It is primarily aimed at business owners who do not have an existing plan but wish to develop one. For business owners who already have a plan, this guideline may be used to assess your existing plan to ensure no significant information has been missed in your planning process.

Examples are used throughout this document to highlight the type of information that needs to go into each section of your plan.

The importance of pre-planning

Under the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001*, animal providers have a legal **duty of care** to take all reasonable steps to provide for the needs of their animals in a way that is appropriate. This includes the provision of food and water, appropriate accommodation, the treatment of injury and disease and handling animals appropriately.

The duty of care requirements relate to what a reasonable person would be expected to have done under the circumstances and include a requirement to take all reasonable actions to plan for and respond to disaster situations.



Evacuating offsite is an absolute last resort. Where possible it is recommended that you plan initially to shelter in place to minimise stress on the animals and staff.

If this is not a safe option it is recommended that alternate accommodation is pre-arranged with another similar facility, or appropriate space. Your pre-planning should focus on developing relationships with other providers within the animal management industry.

RSPCA Qld has representation on the State Disaster Management Group.

Steps for Planning

Shelter in place

- first option to consider if it is safe to do so
- minimises stress to animals and staff
- move to a safer section of your facility
- have a plan to keep extra stock/supplies on site

Alternate accommodation

- have a plan to move offsite
- make arrangements with other providers to help each other
- share space and resources where possible

Additional help (for planning and during a disaster)

- Contact DAF on 13 25 23 (for zoos, wildlife demonstrators)
- Contact Council on (07) 3403 8888 (for boarding kennels/ catteries, pet shops and animal re-homing centres)
- Contact the Office of Racing on 13 25 23 (for the racing industry)

This guideline outlines the type of information that you should consider including when you write or update your disaster management plan. Examples have been provided to assist you with your planning.

Important Note For single operators or small operators some of the formality of this plan may not be necessary but it is recommended for larger operators (especially those with staff) to ensure that the plan is clear and understood by all staff.

Single or small operators can use the principles from this plan to make their own arrangements. It is recommended that you use the preparedness information for pet owners to make your relevant arrangements. See page 12 for links to relevant websites.

Pre-planning

Before you start planning you need to establish what risks there are to your facility. Knowing the risks will give you a guide as to what kind of disasters your facility may be exposed to and how much planning is required.

Therefore, animal owners should;
Be Prepared – Act Early - Be Considerate - Act Safe

Risk assessment

You need to manage the risks to your facility and occupants by identifying and analysing the things that may affect your facility, and your ability to provide continued service, and then choosing the best method of dealing with each of these identified risks.

Have you considered?

- What could cause an impact?
- How serious would that impact be?
- What is the likelihood of this occurring?
- Can it be reduced or eliminated?

The scoping of this guideline **does not** include a detailed breakdown of how to undertake risk assessments or how to create a business continuity plan.

* A business continuity plan ensures that your business can continue to operate regardless if it is being impacted by a disaster, emergency or threat.

For more information on business continuity planning go to:

Business Queensland: <https://www.business.qld.gov.au/running-business/protecting-business/risk-management/continuity-planning>

Remember, your facility may be affected by different types of disasters. You should have a plan that can be used no matter what type of disaster may affect your facility. In the disaster management industry this is known as the “all hazards approach”.

To get you started, think about the following examples:

Planning for all types of disasters	Think outside of the square, what would happen if something unknown occurred?	e.g. unseasonal weather, affected by secondary hazards e.g. water contamination
Your location	Are you located near any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A creek? • A river? • The ocean? • Bush land? • Steep cliffs? • Next to hazardous industry e.g. chemicals/potentially explosive materials etc.? 	e.g. Is your location potentially susceptible to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creek flooding • River flooding • Flash flooding • Storm surge • Tsunami • Bushfire • Landslip • Severe storms • Exposure to excessive heat • To other hazards e.g. explosions, toxic plumes?
The impact to the animals	What are the impacts regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of animals? Health and safety of animals? Care and comfort of animals? Disruption to routine? Loss of electrical power for enclosures? 	e.g. death/injury Susceptible to distress Exposure to illness or disease Fearful/scared animals may create further risk to handlers e.g. biting, scratching Risk of electrified fences not working
The impact to yourself and staff	What are the impacts regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of staff as a result of being affected by the disaster? Not being able to pay staff? 	e.g. you or your staff personally affected by the disaster Access routes cut so staff can't enter or leave the site Laying off staff if there is no work for a period of time
The impact to your business	What are the impacts regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of income? Potentially unknown time before return to normal operation? Impacts to business's reputation? 	e.g. potentially expensive clean up Reliance on insurance to pay out claims Loss of patronage

To learn more about hazards go to:

Brisbane City Council:

<https://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/community/community-safety/disasters-emergencies>

Queensland State government disaster management:

<http://www.disaster.qld.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>

Introductory pages to your plan

The introductory pages of your plan should cover the administrative components of the plan, such as who will make changes to the plan, when it will be reviewed etc.

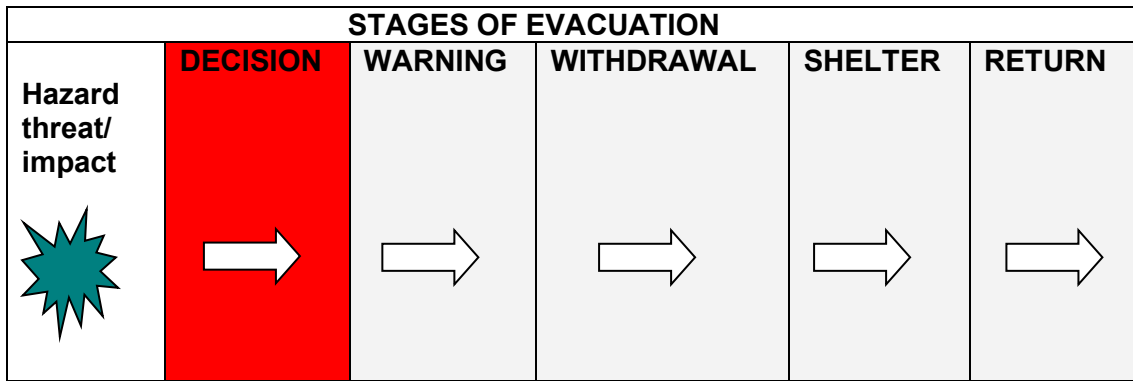
The list below gives examples of the sort of information that should be included in the introductory pages of your plan (if you are doing a formal plan).

Amendments and Review	Who in your organisation will review and update this plan?	e.g. the CEO will make changes to this plan
Distribution	Who will get a copy of this plan?	e.g. all staff, contractors and volunteers. May also include people who are contracted to you or are stakeholders
Distribution list	List the titles of the people who have a copy (this may include people who are contracted to you or are stakeholders)	e.g. Animal handlers Operations Manager Stable hand Contractor X
References	Does this plan link to any relevant legislation, regulation or procedure?	e.g. <i>Animal Care and Protection Act 2001</i> or relevant standards or codes of practice
Audience	Who is this plan aimed at? Is it for certain staff or all staff?	e.g. all staff working at XYZ facility
Approval	Who in your business will approve this plan?	e.g. Manager, CEO?
Custodian	Who can make changes to this document?	e.g. is there a specific person or role who will update this plan?
Purpose	What is this plan covering?	e.g. your plan might focus solely on evacuating offsite
Review	Will you review or test your plan?	e.g. a drill be held annually to test this plan
Activation	Who will have the authority to activate this plan?	e.g. the CEO will activate this plan and will contact all staff
Stakeholders	Do you work with anyone outside of your business who will need to know about this plan or be part of your plan?	e.g. XYZ food provider ABC Animal sanctuary has agreed to share their facility during a disaster
Scope	What is specifically included in your plan?	e.g. this plan only covers what to do if we need to evacuate offsite
Definitions	Are there any relevant definitions that will be used in this document?	e.g. Evacuation: "the planned relocation of persons/animals from dangerous or potentially dangerous areas to safer areas and eventual return".

There is a 5-phased approach used when planning for evacuation. The five phases are:

- **Decision** – what are your decisions when you are considering evacuation?
- **Warning** – how will you communicate to staff and your customers about what is happening/the situation?
- **Withdrawal** – how will you physically move your animals and staff to another site?
- **Shelter** – where is your temporary site to house your animals? What do you need there?
- **Return** – What are the steps for returning back to your business?

Each of these phases should be covered in your plan.



Decision to evacuate

Making the decision whether to evacuate or not requires careful planning to reduce the chance of exposing your business, your animals or your customers to further risk. Careful planning is required to ensure that your facility is not evacuated too early causing unnecessary associated stress to animals, inconvenience and cost. Similarly, if your facility is evacuated too late there may be exposure to higher risk for your staff, customers and animals.

There are three types of evacuation:

- a. Shelter in Place: staff and animals stay in place until it is safe to leave.
- b. Voluntary evacuation: an individual can decide when they want to evacuate
- c. Directed evacuation: a declared officer under legislation can direct people to evacuate

Animals need to be considered as part of the evacuation decision making process.

Things to consider when deciding to evacuate

- Do you really need to evacuate? Is it safer to stay in place or is there a safer location on-site where you may be able to temporarily move?
- How will you know when to evacuate off-site? Who will make that decision?
- Do you need to get authorisation from anyone to evacuate? E.g. do you sub-contract to a larger organisation or have a manager who is not located on-site who you have to seek approval from first?
- If you own a boarding kennel, cattery or pet motel or foster animals, do you need to get authority from pet owners to evacuate their animals? If so, has this been included in your waivers, contracts etc.?
- Where will you go and have you made a prior arrangement with another provider?
- How long can your animals be accommodated in the alternate site?
- Do you need to supply anything to the alternate site to help support the animals (e.g. food, water, medication etc.)?

Time to Evacuate

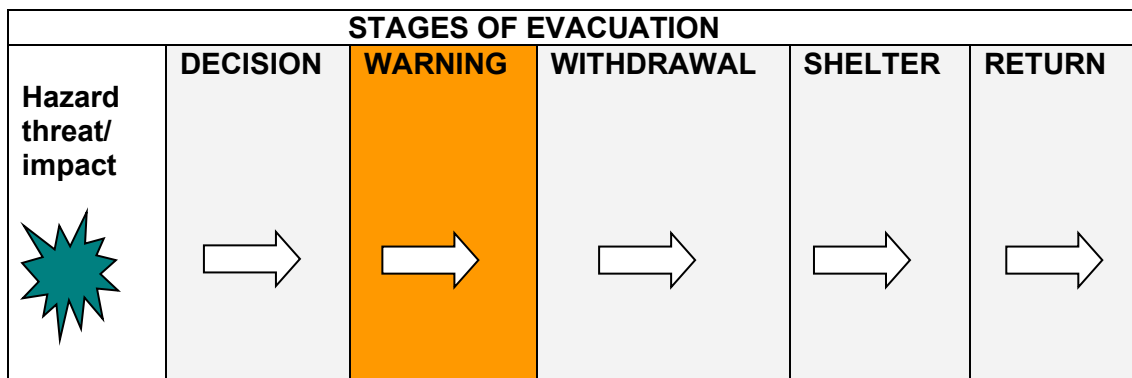
- How much time would it take to evacuate given the size of your facility or business?
- How many staff do you need to assist with evacuation?
- How long will it take to set up a new site?
- What happens if you have to evacuate after hours compared to business hours?
- Do any of the animals have special needs that will require a longer period of time to evacuate?

Transport resources

Your facility should already have the relevant vehicles required to assist you with evacuating your animals to an off-site location. However, in some cases you may be reliant on specialist transport or specialist handlers to assist you. In your plan, consider what those needs are and what arrangements you need to have in place.

You may need to consider the following:

- Who provides transport to you?
- How do you contact your specialist transport providers or specialists in an emergency? (don't forget to include their contact details in your plan)
- Are there any requirements for sedation of animals for transporting? Do experts need to be brought in for this?
- Can the animals be transported in regular vehicles (e.g. personal staff vehicles)?
- Do you know if access to your facility will become an issue if you need to transport your animals? E.g. are you located near an area that gets cut off by flood water?



Warnings

The warning phase of evacuation planning covers what advice or direction you will give. It is critical that timely and accurate information be given through the warning phase.

The following factors may influence the effectiveness of the warning:

- Time – such as time of day, business hours/after hours, as well as how quickly the event is moving e.g. a storm forecast in the next hour as opposed to a flood that will arrive in 3 days.
- Distance – is the threat close or far away?
- Visual evidence – e.g. is it close enough for you to see flames, flood water, etc.?
- Threat characteristics – are the signs there to indicate that the threat is imminent? E.g. the sky is green prior to a hail storm.
- Sense of urgency – e.g. police have issued an evacuation order, is there only a short period of time available to move?

Warning process

Will the process you use to alert staff in an emergency be used for alerting staff for an evacuation?

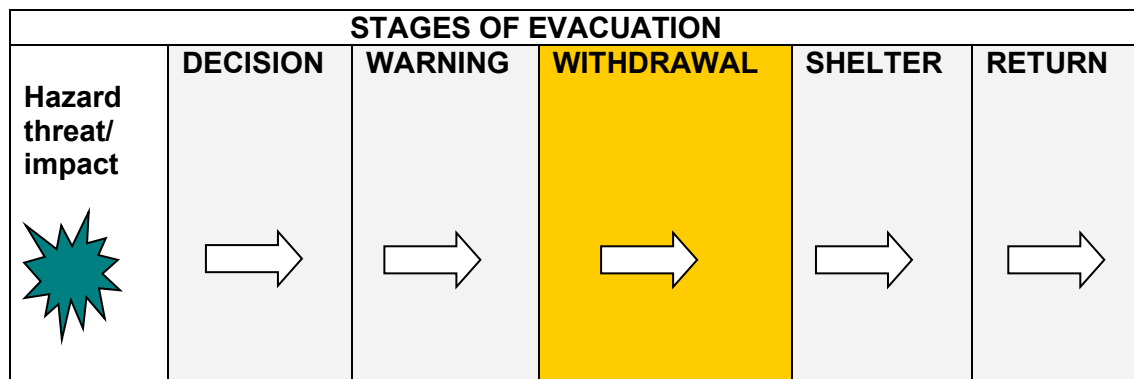
Where do you get your information from and does anyone in our business monitor this? E.g. Bureau of Meteorology radar, the news, the internet etc.

Who do you need to contact if you need to evacuate to a new location?

Do you need to notify your customers that you will be closed? How will you do this?

How do you communicate with your staff and your customers if communications have been affected by the disaster? E.g. power loss.

If you are in a regulated business do you need to advise your regulator if you have to move to a new location?



Withdrawal Phase

The withdrawal phase is the physical movement of evacuees to a safer area. As an expert in your relevant field you will understand the individual needs of your animals.

Securing animals (for transport and alternate location)

Place information in your plan on how to secure your animals so they are ready for transport and can be secured in a new site.

Resources and supply

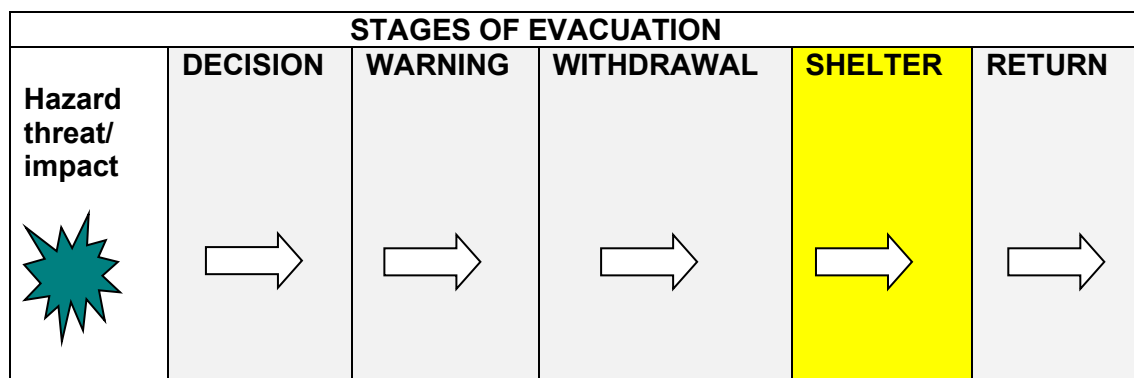
In your plan list all resources and supplies needed to move, house, medicate and feed animals (e.g. feed required to sustain your animals for a week). Be sure to consider the shelter on-site option.

Transport

Place details in your plan on how animals and staff will be transported off-site. Include information on suitable transport routes. Ensure that the transportation of animals complies with your duty of care responsibilities under the *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001*.

Do the animals have:

- Adequate space [loading densities]
- Appropriate shelter
- Access to feed and water [where applicable]
- Adequate segregation for incompatible species and classes of animal



Shelter

The shelter stage refers to the provision of basic needs for affected people and animals away from the immediate or potential effects of the hazard. In this stage alternate sites would be activated (if evacuation off-site is required). It is not until this stage that animals would be relocated.

Responsibility for identifying alternate sites in pre-planning

In your plan you will need to identify where your alternate sites are and who is responsible for organising this? A business continuity plan will help for this.

Information about business continuity plans can be found online at:

<https://www.business.qld.gov.au/running-business/protecting-business/risk-management/continuity-planning>

To ensure that your alternate site is appropriate, check with your regulatory authority.

Also consider your obligations under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and *Stock Route Management Act 2002* (if applicable to your business).

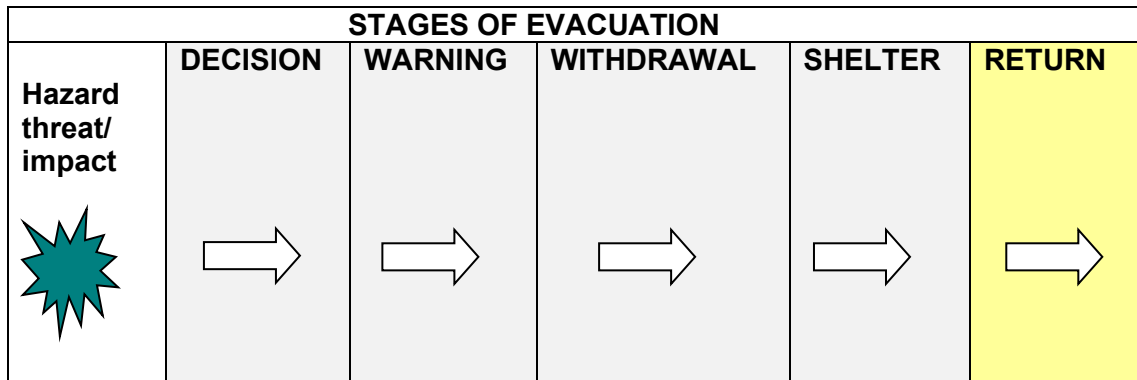
Quarantine impacts

Consider the quarantine impacts for moving to a new site.

- Is there a standard policy at your alternate site where all new animals will need to be vaccinated?
- Do you have any animals that need to be specifically quarantined?
- Are any other animals being put at risk?
- Are the conditions likely to cause quarantine issues?
- Do you need specialist treatments e.g. for exotic species?
- Is there enough stock of vaccines at the alternate site or does it need to be brought in?

Resource support

Think about what you will need to help support your animals and staff while they are relocated. Do you need to make an arrangement with your supplier to provide supplies to your alternate site? Do you have a process in place for recording which animals and what supplies are being accommodated at your alternate site?



Returning

The return of evacuees is the final stage of the evacuation process. At this stage the impact of the event is being assessed and a determination is made as to whether evacuees can return.

Considerations for return

Your plan will need to include information on the following:

- Is it safe to return? (How do you know it is safe to return?)
- Is the route back to your facility accessible?
- What is your transport strategy for the return of animals and staff?
- Are there any disease implications for animals returning to the affected site?
- Do any of your stakeholders or customers need to be notified?
- Do any resources need to be returned to your facility?

Debrief

Following any activation of your plan, it is vital to run a debriefing session and record all information so that important lessons can be learnt.

Debriefs should include the following:

- What worked?
- What didn't work?
- How could it be improved into the future?

This information should be used to update and improve your evacuation plan.

References and useful links

Information in this guideline is based on the Queensland Evacuation Guidelines August 2011 and the Brisbane City Council Evacuation Plan. Below are some useful publications and websites on managing animals in disasters.

Publications:

Queensland State government disaster management general publications:

http://www.disaster.qld.gov.au/Disaster-Resources/Pages/General_Publications.aspx

Preparedness information:

Brisbane City Council – disasters and emergencies

<https://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/community/community-safety/disasters-emergencies>

Brisbane City Council – be prepared

<https://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/community/community-safety/disasters-emergencies/be-prepared>

Queensland Government: Animal welfare in natural disasters: <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/animal-industries/welfare-and-ethics/animal-welfare/natural-disasters>

Queensland State government - Prepare your pets:

<https://www.qld.gov.au/emergency/dealing-disasters/prepare-pets.html>

RSPCA Queensland

<https://www.rspcaqld.org.au/what-we-do/disasters-and-alerts>