

MR11/0112

13 Friday 2012

GOVERNMENT VETS PARTICIPATE IN BUSHFIRE RESPONSE TRAINING DAY

Sixteen volunteer government vets will join the ACT's Chief Veterinary Officer in a bushfire preparation training day on Sunday 15 January 2012.

The training day will be run by Territory and Municipal Services' trained fire fighters alongside Dr Will Andrew, the ACT Government's veterinarian.

"We're pleased to be hosting a full day of bushfire training for 16 veterinarians from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF)," Dr Andrew said today.

"The training day will provide us with the opportunity to train volunteer vets from DAFF in the skills required in an emergency situation such as assessing burnt livestock and safety on the fire ground. The training will also help familiarise staff with ACT Government procedures allowing for a more rapid response to any bushfire.

"The full day training session on Sunday will cover:

- operational response requirements such as the daily routine for a vet during a bushfire, assessing burnt livestock and the use of treatments;
- field skills such as map reading, an introduction to four wheel driving and use of the ACT's two way radio communication network;
- Occupational Health and Safety training including safety on the fire ground, basic first aid and safety around firearms; and
- necessary personal protective equipment and response kit.

"In the event of a bushfire, up to six veterinary staff may be required per day depending on the size of the incident. These vets will need to visit farms within the bushfire affected area and assist in the assessment of burnt livestock. This may include recommendations on treatment or euthanasia and insurance claims," Dr Andrew said.

During the 2003 Canberra bushfires the ACT Government was able to call on the assistance of volunteer veterinary staff from DAFF. Following the bushfires, there has been on-going training between the two government departments.

Manager of the TAMS Fire Management Unit, Mr Neil Cooper said the 16 veterinarians will be a valuable resource in the event of a bushfire in addition to the 150 full trained and skilled fire fighters that TAMS already provides to the ACT.

"We currently have nationally accredited people at all levels of fire management from regular fire fighters to remote area fire teams and helicopter observers through to the highest level of Incident Management Team personnel.

"Training and skills maintenance is a primary focus for our fire unit. This year alone we have allocated more than 1,888 person days to training. This is in addition to the hazard reduction burns which are used to not only reduce fuel but to also exercise our staff in the skills required in a fire suppression situation."

A photo opportunity of the volunteer vets participating in bushfire response exercises is available between 11 am and 11.30 am on Sunday 15 January 2012. For more details please call 6207 6882 or 0428 970 699 (after-hours media).

Statement Ends

Media contact: Kelly Ashcroft, 6207 6882