



DPI assesses needs



IMMEDIATE animal welfare, hay, fencing and livestock needs of landholders affected by bushfires is being assessed by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) across the state.

DPI statewide recovery manager Dwane O'Brien said DPI had assessed more than 2200 properties across bushfire affected areas up to Tuesday.

DPI animal health staff are assisting with livestock welfare – water, feed, euthanasia and treatment of injured livestock. In areas where landholders' urgent needs have been met, DPI rural recovery officers are returning to affected properties to conduct more detailed assessment of fire damage, stock, fencing and fodder losses.

Landholders will be able to access advice on feed budgeting and planning to manage livestock with reduced feed

supplies over the coming weeks.

DPI is also providing long-term recovery advice for the re-establishment of pasture, herd and flock rebuilding, re-establishment of horticultural and viticulture plantings, soil conservation, stock containment and weed control.

More than 300 DPI staff are assisting with bushfire response and recovery efforts each day. Staff from the south-west are currently assisting affected farmers in the Colac, Horsham and Gippsland areas.

People travelling on roads within the affected area should be aware that there could be wandering livestock on the roads and DPI urges drivers to exercise caution.

NEW FARM PROGRAM

GROUPS of farmers are now invited to apply to the award-winning Sustainable Farm Families

(SFF) program.

The straight-forward, no-fuss program offering practical advice has already proved life-changing for many past participants and now an additional 500 farmers are set to benefit.

The workshops are broken down into yearly sessions with long-term follow-ups focusing on practical steps to improve the lives of farm families in areas that are undergoing significant change.

Farmers will learn how to understand their own health risks and how to manage them and integrate them into farming life, which can be difficult given the pressures they face.

Other sessions include discussions on cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, stress, nutrition and physical activity, anxiety and depression, as well as farm safety.

Farming industry and community groups with up to 24 individual farmers who would like to participate in the program are encouraged to contact the DPI now on 136 186. Applications close March 27. More information on the SFF can be found at www.sustainablefarmfamilies.org.au.

CONFERENCE DISCOUNT

Conference organiser Sue Davies will be at the DPI tent at the Sungold Field Days today to take registrations for the Victorian Dairy Conference on March 30 and 31. The early-bird discount of \$20 to \$30 has been extended to be available over the field days period. Farmers are encouraged to book in now to secure a spot in the program tailored specifically for the dairy industry.



The needs of animals affected by the bushfires, like these cattle at Pomborneit, are being assessed by DPI.

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