



For all creatures great and small.

Media Release

Foster carers needed to shelter RSPCA animals in bushfires

The RSPCA is calling for kind people willing to act as temporary foster carers to RSPCA shelter animals, should bushfires threaten either its Blue Mountains or Central Coast animal shelters.

RSPCA state shelters coordinator Russell Cox said both shelters are in high risk areas for bushfires. Each shelter needs up to 100 foster carers ready for emergencies.

"The animals' only home is the RSPCA shelter, so these kind people would be entrusted with a very special role," he said.

He said in the event of an imminent bushfire, RSPCA staff and volunteers would evacuate all shelter animals, including sick and injured cats, kittens, dogs, puppies, rabbits, guinea pigs, chickens, ducks and small and large birds.

"We have strategies in place to look after the shelter livestock and horses but need help with the smaller animals.

"The RSPCA has a duty of care to the animals and we will do all in our power to make sure they are protected."

During the 2001 bushfires, RSPCA NSW coordinated a massive rescue operation of native and domestic animals and livestock.

"There is a great spirit of teamwork and compassion for animal victims. It is a real privilege to be able to help the animals and we encourage people to enlist."

Guidelines for potential foster carers:

- Ideally, *foster carers will have experience in dealing with specific species – eg cat owners will foster shelter cats, dog owners will foster dogs.*
- *Foster carers wanting to care for a shelter dog need suitably fenced yard; if they have a dog, he/she must be sociable with other dogs or the carer needs an area where the dogs can be separated.*
- *Foster carers need to visit the shelter to meet the staff and animals - let RSPCA staff know what animals they can foster and complete a Foster Care form - bring identification with home address.*

To register to become a foster carer, please phone: **Blue Mountains:** Kathy Kay: (02) 4782 2674. **Central Coast:** Deb Spencer: (02) 43722044

NB: For emergency planning to protect animals in disaster, visit the Australian Government's **Emergency Management Australia** website: <http://www.ema.gov.au>

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