



# Ag & Vet Weekly

*All the news on ASX-listed agriculture and veterinary companies*

Friday January 10, 2020

## Bushfire Special Edition

**\$1bn insurance claims  
15k properties damaged  
11k livestock lost  
'100s of millions' lost to tourism**

The East Coast Australia bushfires have so far cost \$1 billion in insurance claims, with more than 14,893 properties burnt, 10,500 livestock lost, and 3,500 animals missing.

All agencies have told Ag & Vet Weekly that these numbers are likely to rise, significantly, and do not include unknown numbers of wildlife, with an estimate of "hundreds of millions of dollars" lost by the multi-billion dollar tourism industry.

### NEW SOUTH WALES

This morning, a New South Wales Department of Primary Industries spokesperson told Ag & Vet Weekly that there were more than 100 fires still active across New South Wales and "the bushfires have taken a huge toll on livestock, on farms and farm infrastructure".

"There have been over 14,300 rural landholdings affected by fires between July 1, 2019 and January 8, 2020," the spokesperson said.

At least 593 properties in Victoria have been damaged or destroyed (see below).

"Since the start of the fire season more than 8,000 animals have been confirmed deceased or euthanized," the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries spokesperson said.

The NSW Department of Primary Industries said that about 30 dairy enterprises on the South Coast of New South Wales had been affected with "widespread damage to apple orchards and vineyards, especially within the Snowy Valley and Batlow regions".

The Department said that with Local Land Services staff it was conducting site assessments, but limited access to firegrounds and loss of power and telephones meant “the full picture of losses and damage to agricultural industries will take some time to emerge” (see Contacts section below).

On January 8, the New South Wales Farmers Association said that about 9,000 farms in that state had been impacted by the bushfires, many farmers had lost pastures and stored forage and were “in urgent need of fodder to help keep animals alive”.

The New South Wales Farmers Association told Ag & Vet Weekly on January 7 that the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) reported 6,284 head of livestock dead or put down this bushfire season, with 5,198 lost in South-East NSW since Christmas.

NSW Farmers president James Jackson said the figure was “likely to rise in coming days as assessment teams and farmers gain access to other active fire grounds”.

“The NSW Farmers dairy committee is reporting that fodder and fuel is starting to make its way to dairy farms on the South Coast, which will be urgently needed,” Mr Jackson said.

“Dairy producers on the South Coast have had the most pressing need for immediate support and the DPI and Local Land Services have done a good job getting emergency fodder, generators and fuel into dairy farms in this region,” Mr Jackson said.

Mr Jackson said that “the impact on horticultural operations will be extensive as well ... the fires have impacted a wide variety of agricultural enterprises in NSW, from oyster sheds on the South Coast to apple orchards in Batlow and Bilpin and honey producers.”

## **VICTORIA**

A Victoria State Emergency Service spokesperson told Ag & Vet Weekly this morning that 3,000 damage assessments in North East Victoria and East Gippsland, had shown 244 residential properties lost and 349 non-residential properties damaged or destroyed.

The Victoria Government said that livestock losses were nearly 2,500 by today, up from 1,300 earlier in the week.

A Victoria Government spokesperson today told Ag & Vet Weekly that 379 properties had been visited, with 1,819 confirmed livestock losses in the Upper Murray area, 672 in East Gippsland and the number “expected to increase significantly”.

On January 8, the Victoria Farmers Federation told Ag & Vet Weekly, that “Agriculture Victoria animal health and impact assessment teams have visited 290 properties in the past week, providing an initial assessment of 1,150 confirmed livestock losses in the Upper Murray area and 150 in Gippsland across dairy, beef and sheep - with more than 3,500 animals still reported as missing across both regions”.

In a media release, the Victoria Government said the Agriculture Victoria Relief and Recovery Incident Management Team had been established at the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions Biosecurity Centre at Attwood, with command posts at Wodonga and Bairnsdale.

The Victoria Government said the teams would coordinate agriculture relief operations for all fires in the Upper Murray and Gippsland regions and oversee relief in other fire-affected areas for the rest of the summer.

“Twenty-one private vets will also work in the Upper Murray based at relief centres to assist Agriculture Victoria with animal welfare cases,” the media release said.

“After an emergency, it’s essential all livestock is assessed for injury and disease, which can spread more quickly in these situations,” the Victoria Government said.

## **INSURANCE**

The Insurance Council of Australia told Ag & Vet Weekly this morning that “as of January 10, insurers have received 10,550 claims from New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland from the November-January bushfire catastrophe”, which was declared on November 8, 2019.

The Council said that Insurance losses were estimated at \$939 million but two earlier bushfires at Rappville, NSW, in October saw 225 claims for a total of \$19 million and northern New South Wales/southern Queensland had 497 claims for \$37 million, taking the total bushfire catastrophe losses since September 5 to \$995 million from a total of 11,272 claims.

## **TOURISM**

Australian Tourism Industry Council executive director Simon Westaway told Ag & Vet Weekly that the cost of the bushfires to Victoria would be in the order of “tens of millions of dollars and hundreds of millions of dollars to Australia”.

Mr Westaway said the industry was currently worth about \$150 billion a year with about \$110 billion from domestic tourism and more than \$40 billion from foreign tourists.

He said that the “knock-on effects would be significant with regions becoming reliant on tourism for their economies.”

“There have been lots of cancelled bookings and that creates a domino effect,” Mr Westaway said. “First we need to put out the fires and then rebuild resilience.”

Tourism Australia said that it was too early to assess the cost to tourism.

Tourism Australia managing-director Phillipa Harrison said that “the number one priority right now continues to be the emergency response to these devastating bushfires and the safety of communities and tourists in affected areas”.

“As we have seen, a number of regional destinations have been affected and people’s travel plans have been impacted but at this stage it is too early to quantify the full impact of the bushfires on the tourism industry,” Ms Harrison said.

According to the Tourism Victoria website, tourism contributed \$26.7 billion to the State economy or 6.2 percent of State Gross Domestic Product, with 232,700 jobs, 7.2 percent of all Victoria employment.

## **CONTACTS**

The NSW Farmers Association said that stock losses and infrastructure damage could be reported, and animal assessment, emergency fodder or water for stock requested by calling the Agricultural and Animal Services Hotline on 1800 814 647, or via direct message to the NSW DPI Facebook page.

The Victoria Government said that farmers could arrange a visit from Agriculture Victoria through contact Victoria Emergency by telephone on 1800 226 226.

The State Government said that National Livestock Identification System regulations remained in place for cattle, sheep and goats after a fire, but animal welfare was the highest priority and NLIS requirements can be addressed once stock are relocated.

The Victoria Government said it was working with the Victorian Farmers Federation, local hay runners and the Australian Defence Force to provide fodder and farmers in need should contact the VFF on 1300 882 833, with immediate financial support through both the Victorian Emergency Relief Assistance Payment via the Victoria Emergency hotline on 1800 226 226 and the Commonwealth Government’s Disaster Recovery Program Payment on 180 22 66.

For more information on support, contact Agriculture Victoria on 136 186 or go to: [www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/emergencies/recovery/gippsland-upper-murray-fires](http://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/emergencies/recovery/gippsland-upper-murray-fires).

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