

"If he is the only thing I drive away with - that's fine by me"

Strengthening resilience and recovery through better emergency preparedness and planning for animals

Australian Disaster Resilience Conference / 2018

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MACQUARIE
University



bushfire&natural
HAZARDSCRC



Australian Government
Department of Industry,
Innovation and Science

Business
Cooperative Research
Centres Programme

Pets in people's lives

A critical piece in the resilience narrative

- Australia has one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world
- People form close bonds with their pets; meaning they play an important psychosocial role in our lives
- Companion animals are often considered family members providing comfort and affection, routine and stability
- Understanding human-animal relationships is “a critical element in promoting the resilience of individuals and communities” (Hall et al. 2004)



Source: <http://www.techietonics.com/health-tonics/the-human-animal-bond-a-healing-power.html>

Impact of animal loss in emergencies

Vulnerabilities and disenfranchised grief

- In emergencies pet ownership is associated with:
 - failure to evacuate
 - undertaking risky behavior to rescue animals
- Loss of a pet is associated with poor well-being and mental health outcomes
- Grief resulting from animal loss is often diminished or ignored (disenfranchised)



Source: The Newcastle Herald

Impact of animal loss in emergencies

Research evidence

- International research:
 - Hurricane Katrina – pet loss linked to significantly higher levels of acute stress, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (Hunt, Al-Awadi and Johnson, 2008)
 - Similar findings in Japan (Goto et al. 2006) and New Zealand
 - Coombs et al. 2015 found that companion dogs influenced human health and well-being during and after the Christchurch earthquakes
- Little research in Australia on the roles animals play in the recovery phase



The memorial outside Winmalee Greencross Vets.
Source: Mel Taylor

MAiD and Blue ARC

Community-led action



Source: <https://www.news.com.au>

- BNHCRC Managing Animals in Disasters (MAiD) project sought to identify best practice approaches to animal emergency management
- We teamed up with a community-led group in the Blue Mountains, NSW called Blue ARC: Animal Ready Community
- The aim of Blue ARC is to support community resilience in emergency events through better awareness, preparedness, planning and response for companion animals, livestock, and native wildlife
- Together we developed a survey of Blue Mountains residents to better understand patterns of pet ownership, emergency preparedness and experiences during recent emergency events



Blue Mountains

The area and people



- The Blue Mountains Local Government area is located at the western fringe of the Greater Sydney Region
- It covers 140,377 hectares, 74 per cent of which comprises UNESCO World Heritage National Park Area
- There are approximately 80,000 residents living in 27 towns and villages spread across the top of a heavily forested mountain ridge
- More than half of working residents (52%) commute out of area for work
- People over the age of 65 make up around 20% of the population
- We estimate around **16,850 households in the Blue Mountains have pets**

Blue Mountains

Fire and loss



Source: Blue Mountains Gazette

- One of the most bushfire prone areas in Australia
- Most destructive fires in 30 years - October 2013. Three major fires burnt for four weeks, burning over 118,000 hectares of land. A total of 203 homes were lost and a further 286 were damaged
- No human fatalities, but many pets and other animals died. The numbers are not known as there is no official record of animal deaths
- Many residents attempted to return home to rescue pets and other animals contrary to official advice
- Longer term impact of pet loss recognised by groups and community members assisting with recovery, e.g. Salvation Army, Red Cross, school teachers and counsellors, and local veterinarians

Collecting data

The survey

- Questionnaire developed - assessing residents' characteristics, pet ownership patterns, emergency preparedness for their animals, and needs/gaps for preparing and planning for animals in local emergencies
- Respondents - current residents in the Blue Mountains and surrounding areas who either own, care for, and/or work with companion animals, livestock, and/or wildlife
- Administered online - promoted on social media, local newspaper, through Neighbourhood Centres. Hard copy also available.
- Took ~20 minutes - longer for those who had experienced an emergency event and completed that section.

Your voice, their lives.



Animals in Emergencies Survey
Blue Mountains & surrounding areas

Community emergency preparedness & planning for animals.
Issues from previous emergencies. Local needs and gaps.
Help give animals a voice by filling in the survey.

Complete the survey online at
www.surveymonkey.com/r/animals-in-emergencies-survey

Request a printed copy from
The Turning Page Bookshop, Springwood Ph: 02 4751 5171 or
Blue ARC: www.facebook.com/BlueMountainsARC/ Blue_ARC@yahoo.com

For all other enquiries contact:
Mel Taylor, Bushfire & Natural Hazards CRC — mel.taylor@mq.edu.au



Sample description

Demographics



Source: Bluemts.com.au

- 292 respondents (Feb – Apr 2017)
- 88% female
- 49% aged 45-64, with 40% aged under 45, and 11% aged 65 or older
- 64% lived in the area for more than 10 years (20% - 5-10 years)
- 39% - all adults away from home >30mins away - 'a lot of the time' or 'quite often' (week days)
- 92% usually had access to a private vehicle, (4% sometimes; 4% no access)

Animal ownership

Survey results

- 98% owned at least one cat or dog
- Top five
 - dogs (76%)
 - cats (54%)
 - chickens (27%)
 - fish (14%)
 - birds (14%)
- 53% of dog owners own >1 dog, and 66% of cat owners own >1 cat
- 12% larger animals ('lovestock') - horses, sheep, cows, goats, alpacas and pigs
- 3% animal-related businesses, 6% fostering/sheltering/re-homing animals
- 16% feel responsible for another person's pet

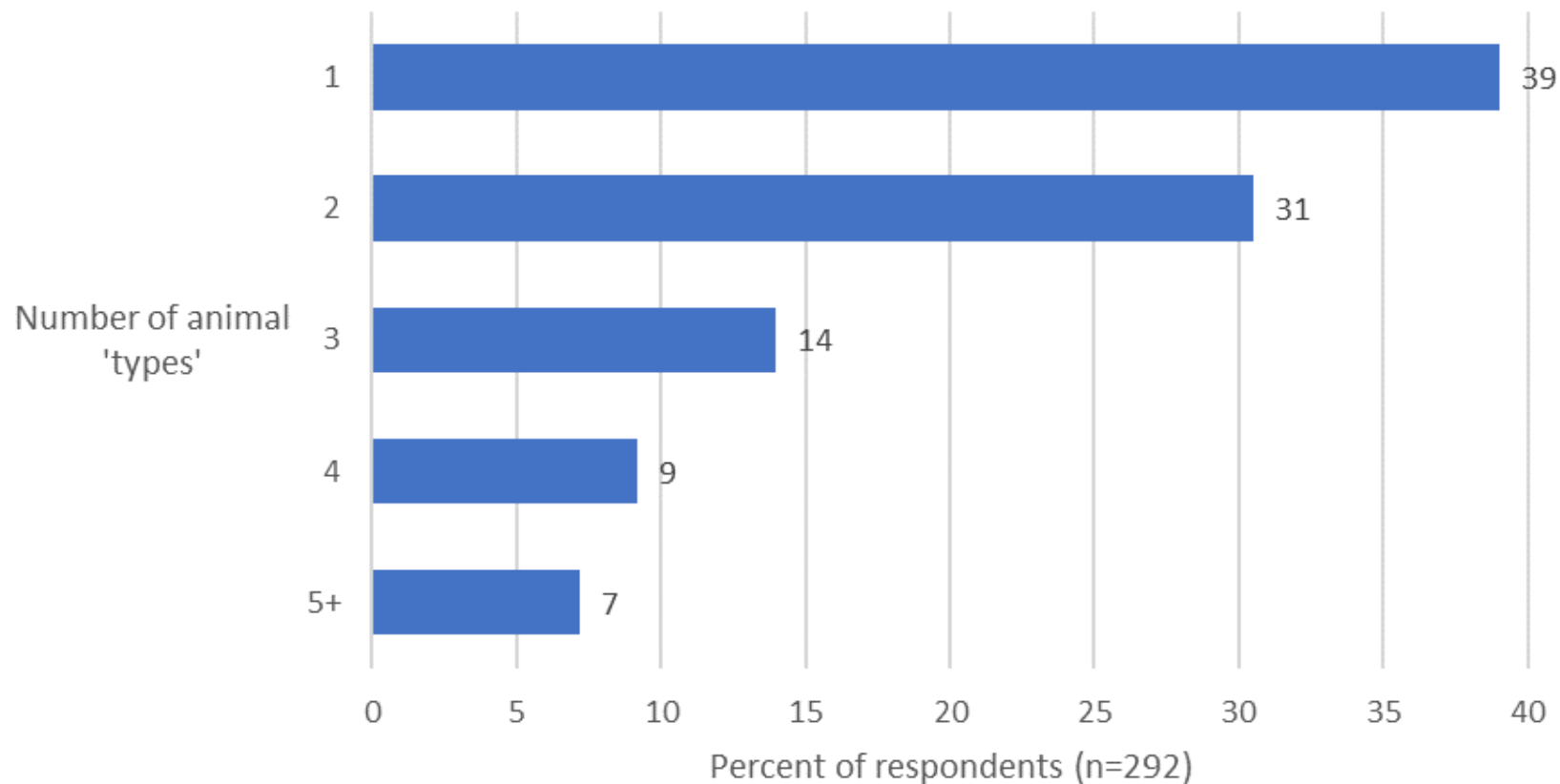


Source: Blue Mountains Gazette

Animal ownership in the Blue Mountains

Animal mix

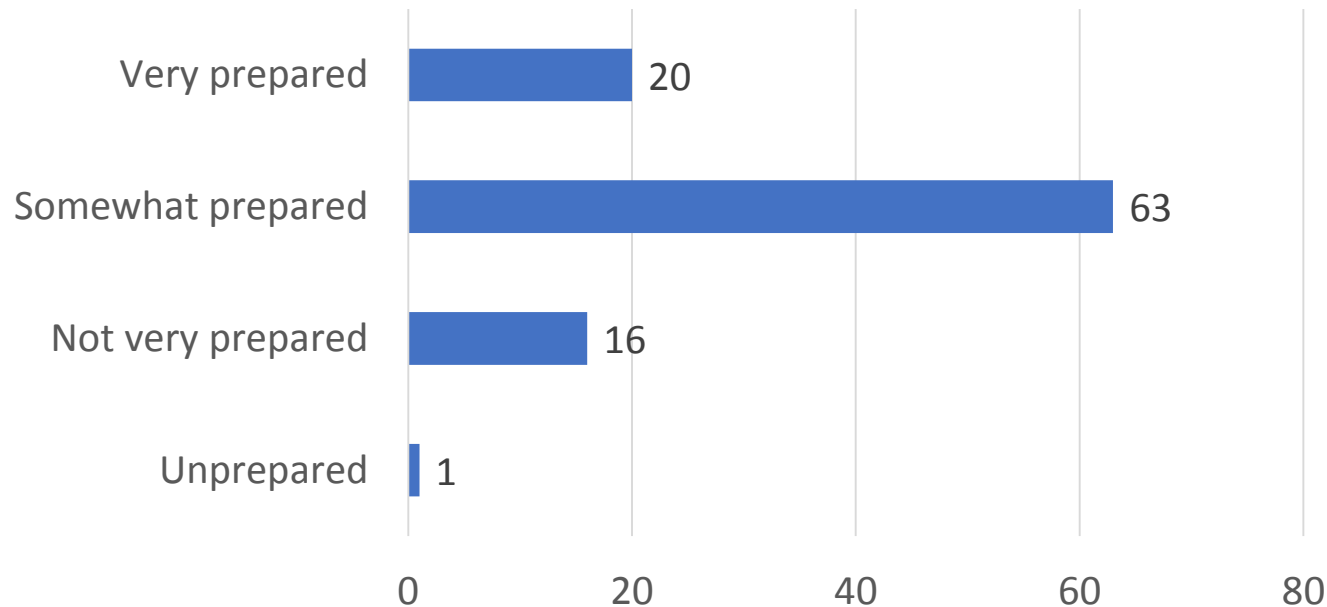
The number of animal 'types' owned by respondents, i.e. dogs, cats, chickens, horses.



Note: most respondents own a mix of multiple animals, even those with only one 'type' of animal own more than one of them, e.g. 3 dogs.

Emergency preparation

Preparedness and planning



Source: www.thisisinsider.com

- 72% reported they had included their animals in their emergency planning, however
 - 47% had a clear plan for where they would take the animals they evacuated
 - 26% have no clear plan in place.

Would you evacuate if you could not take your animals?

- 43% 'definitely would not' evacuate and a further 42% 'might not' evacuate or would question the need to leave. Only 14% said they would 'probably' or 'definitely' evacuate without their pets.
- Many respondents commented how difficult this decision would be because of the close bond they have with their animals:

If I'm leaving my dog is too!!!!

This would be a traumatic experience if I was required to make this dreadful decision.

I am lucky as cats are so portable. I would take them and nothing else in my car if I had to.

Having lost a dog in a bushfire there is no way I would leave without our current dog, saying that if we had to leave (were given evacuation notice) I would leave, but with the dog. I'd like to see someone try and argue with me about it.

I would rather burn to death than leave my cats.



Source: Jenny Bigelow

Transportation

Constraints – trips and people



Source: <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au>

- 80% felt they could evacuate all their animals and people in a single trip
- Transport concerns contribute to uncertainties about how long it would take to evacuate animals, with some relying on more than one trip to take more difficult or lower priority animals.
- For some, evacuation decisions were related to who may be present to help them:

I think we would only be able to evacuate the chickens if two people were home and we had two vehicles here. I don't think they could fit in the one vehicle with the dog and cats.

I don't think I could physically lift the goats onto the ute (or coax up a ramp) if my husband was too far away from home to arrive in time in a bushfire situation. My neighbours would be busy in similar situations so I cannot assume I can rely on them to help with the manual lifting or handling them to go up a ramp. If this were to happen we have discussed letting them free to hopefully escape if there was no other option.

Animal behaviour & characteristics

Not all animals are equal

- 28% of respondents have one or more animals with behaviour-related issues, e.g. aggression, anxiety
 - 26% have elderly animals,
 - 11% have sick animals with medical needs.
-
- Some respondents mentioned specific concerns about animal behaviour that may add stress and time to an evacuation:

Cats can be scared to get in the carrier, especially if they sense urgency.

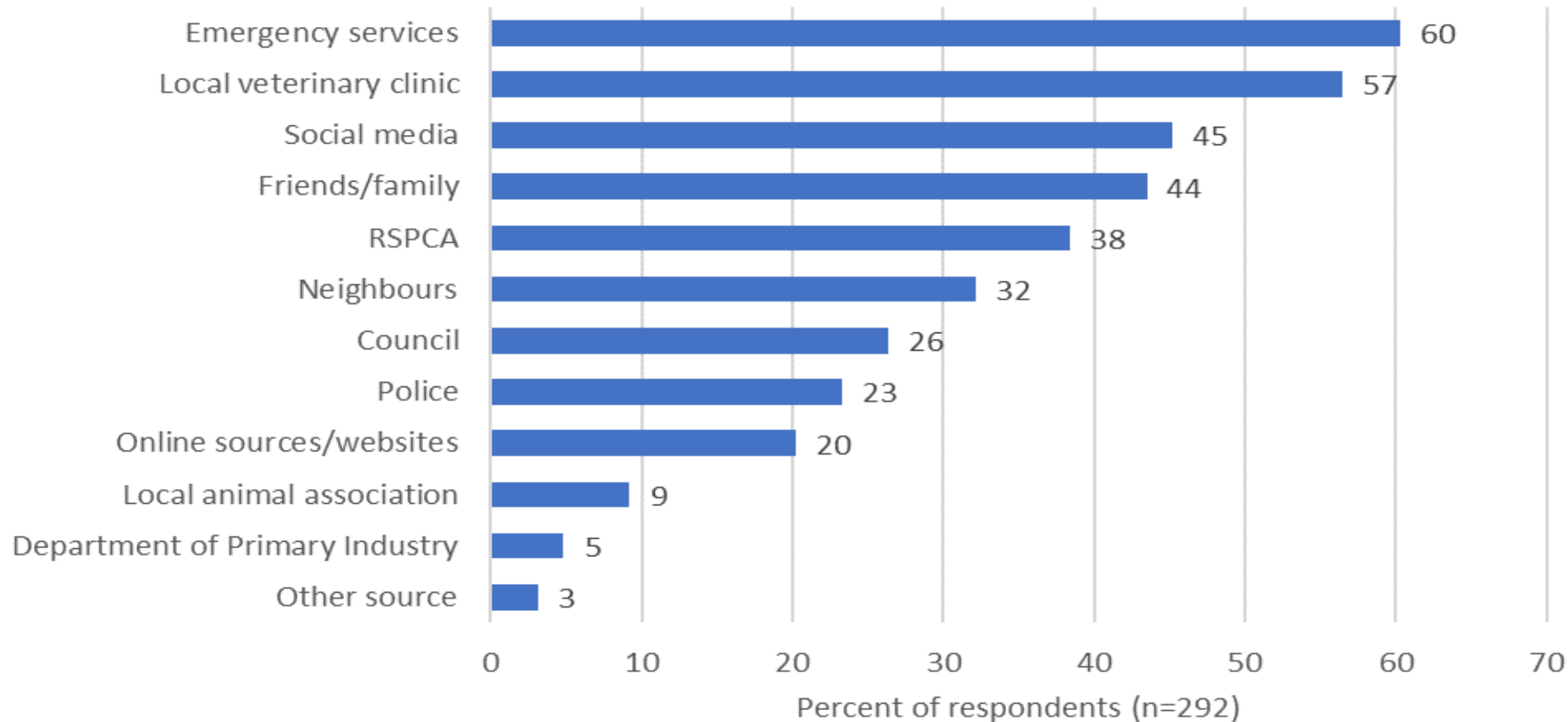
Indoor bird. Too aggressive to catch and put in a travel container.

I would not be able to find one or both of my cats. If they were frightened they would hide somewhere they felt safe it may be possible I would not be able to find them before we had to leave.



Source: Megan McCarthy

Seeking information and help

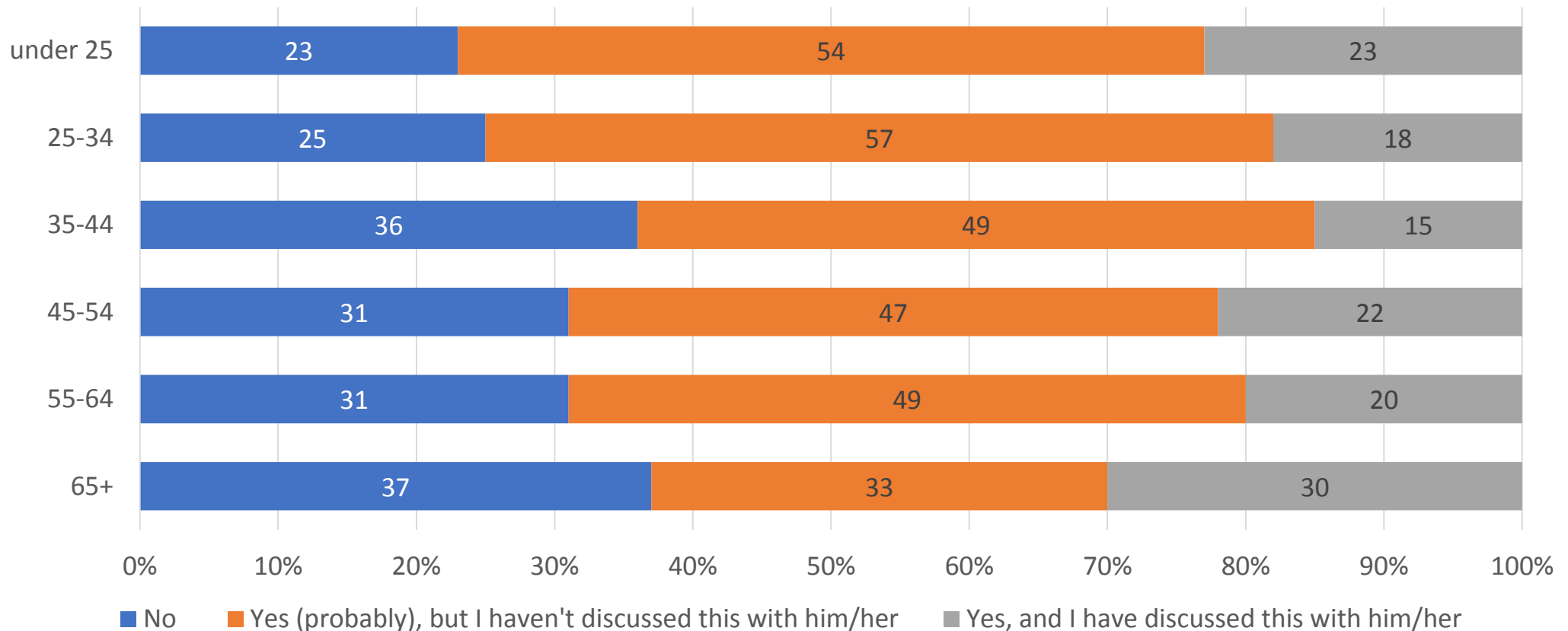


Where would you go if you needed information or advice about what to do with your animals in an emergency?

Emergency planning for pets

Neighbours and connectedness

If you were unable to get home to evacuate your animals do you have a neighbour or nearby friend/family member who could do this for you?



Summary points

- Significance of the human-animal bond
 - Vulnerabilities and strengths
- Barriers to planning
 - Complexities of animal ownership – practical/logistical
 - Lurking constraints – commuting, transport, people
 - Information
- Opportunities
 - Harnessing passion
 - Enhancing engagement – community-led approaches
 - Promoting connectedness



Are you ready?
Make a plan for ALL your family

Links to assist you with emergency preparedness:

- Red Cross – www.redcross.org.au/prepare.aspx
- RFS – www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare
- SES – www.seshomeemergencyplan.com.au
- AVA – www.ava.com.au/public/animals-and-natural-disasters
- DPI – www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/emergency
- RSPCA – www.rspcansw.org.au/learn/owning-a-pet/disaster-management-plan

Logos: BLUE ARC, NEPEAN THERAPY DOGS INC., Springwood Neighbourhood Centre, bushfire&natural HAZARDS CRC, BLUE MOUNTAINS RESILIENCE & PREPAREDNESS

Supporting resilience

Final reflections

- Value of data and the data collection process
 - Raise awareness, identify gaps/issues, open up discussions
- Locally-relevant discussions and identifications of solutions
 - Community – Emergency Management
 - Use community groups and organisations (specialist knowledge and support)
- Small-scale personalised engagement for difficult discussions
- Compassion in communication post event



Source: Mel Taylor



PLANNING FOR ANIMALS IN EMERGENCIES SEMINAR

MAKE A PLAN. PREPARE A KIT. BE INFORMED.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6TH

**SPRINGWOOD SPORTS CLUB,
83 MACQUARIE RD, SPRINGWOOD**

OPENS AT 9.30AM FOR A 10AM START

PROGRAM*

10 – 10.50am	Household & Property Preparedness Michael Biber, SES; representatives from RFS & Red Cross
10.50 – 11.10am	Morning tea
11.10 – 12pm	Managing Domestic Pets in Emergencies Dr Robert Johnson, South Penrith Vet Clinic; representative from DPI
12 – 12.30pm	Assisting Injured & Displaced Wildlife Greg Keightley, wildlife carer
12.30 – 1pm	Lunch break
1 – 1.30pm	Emergency First Aid for Domestic Pets Caroline Outred, VN, Richmond TAFE
1.30 – 3pm	Managing Large Animals in Emergencies Dr Christine Smith, Agnes Banks Equine Clinic; Misty Stebbing, Equine Disaster Coordinator; representative from RFS

*Program may be subject to change

COST: gold coin donation

Come for the day, or drop in for individual sessions.
Morning tea provided. Lunch can be purchased at the club.

TO REGISTER OR MAKE ENQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT:

Blue ARC

Facebook: search Blue ARC;
Email: jennybigelow@yahoo.com.au

Winmalee Neighbourhood Centre

Ph: (02) 4754 4050

Early registrations would be appreciated for numbers.

Blue ARC
Facebook



PROUDLY BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



Thank you

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