

Cyclone and flood emergencies

George Sulc

The Western Australian State Emergency Service (WASES) is the Lead Combat Authority for both cyclones and floods occurring in Western Australia. This means that the agency is responsible for ensuring that all activities related to the prevention of, the preparedness for, the response to and the recovery from these emergency situations are taken. But not necessarily all performed by members of the WASES.

The WASES currently operates without the force of legislation to discharge its responsibilities. Therefore, it relies heavily on the cooperation and good will of the agencies who work with it during emergencies. As an agency it cannot compel anyone, not even its own members, who are almost all volunteers, to do its bidding.

Dealing with farm and companion animals during cyclone and flood emergencies can create significant difficulties for emergency services personnel. Whilst the priority will always be to minimise the loss of life and suffering of people recognition is given to the important role played by farm and companion animals in the lives people.

The presentation will:

- outline current policy in regard to animals during cyclones and floods;
- describe the present advice given to animal owners for emergency situations;
- highlight the difficulties faced by emergency services personnel in dealing with animals; and
- explore possible improvements which could be made in present arrangements.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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George served as a commissioned officer in the Australian Army for a period of 22 years in Australia, Vietnam, New Guinea and West Germany until 1979. From 1979 until 1982 he spent two years as a project officer on an Australian aid project in the Solomon Islands. The next three years from 1982 to 1985 were spent in commerce retailing. In 1985 he joined the WASES as a planning officer. He was then promoted to the position of State Training Manager, a position he held for six years. He transferred to the post of State Operations Manager until 1997 and is now the Regional Manager for the North Metro/Midlands regions of the state.