



September 2020 Bulletin

State of Nevada Board of Veterinary
Medical Examiners

How to Advise Clients During Fire Season

Currently, much of the West Coast is experiencing the threat of wildfires either from the fires themselves or from dangerous levels of smoke stretching from northern Washington to the very southern most areas of California and millions of acres in between and eastward.

While it is best to have these discussions when the threat of wildfire is less severe, it is never too late to have conversations with pet owners about what to look out for in cases of health problems that may affect pets as well as having a plan in case an emergency situation requires evacuation.

The most severe situations can arise in animals that already suffer from chronic or have a history of acute respiratory or cardiovascular diseases or symptoms. If a pet has this medical history, owners may want to consider following guidance for sensitive groups since their pets would have more severe reactions to airborne smoke and particulate concentrations. Encouraging pet owners to check AirNow.gov can give them a sense of what the air quality is in their area on a day-to-day basis. Following the guidance for sensitive groups would allow owners to make decisions on when and how often to let their pets outside or the level of activity that should be allowed.



Owners should look out for signs of:

- Coughing or gagging
 - Difficulty breathing, including open mouth or increased noise when breathing (especially if this is a recent change or it has become much more severe with increasing smoke saturation)
 - Eye irritation and excessive watering
 - Inflammation of throat or mouth
 - Nasal discharge
 - Asthma-like symptoms
 - Increased breathing rate
 - Fatigue or weakness
 - Disorientation or stumbling
- Reduced appetite and/or thirst

It is also advisable to encourage owners to seek out veterinary advice or consultation when these symptoms arise or if they aren't sure about the severity.

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Discussing tips on what to do when limited outdoor access for their pets is recommended, can help owners feel less lost when it comes to a dangerous air quality situation.

- Keep pets indoors as much as possible, and keep your windows shut.
- Birds are particularly susceptible and should not be allowed outside when smoke or particulate matter are present.
- Let dogs and cats outside only for brief bathroom breaks if air quality alerts are in effect.
- Avoid intense outdoor exercise during periods of poor air quality. Exercise pets when dust and smoke has settled.
- Check more often that pets have access to clean fresh water and don't store water outside as ash or other particulates can settle in open water vessels.
- Try to reduce indoor pollution by not frying foods or broiling, using candles, fireplaces or woodstoves, smoking indoors, vacuuming or dusting.
- Have a pet evacuation kit ready
- Include your animals in your disaster preparedness planning.



While it is easier to give recommendations to companion animals that can spend time inside during high smoke events, there are animals that cannot be housed inside. For owners that have outdoor livestock or horses, these conversations can be especially important to ensure that animals are not harmed by excessive smoke.

- Limit exercise when smoke is visible or there are air quality warnings. It is especially important for animals that are exposed to smoke outdoors not to perform activities that would increase the airflow to the lungs
- Provide plenty of fresh water near feeding areas and attempt to cover water from overhead exposure. Replace water frequently to avoid high concentrations of particulates from building up in the vessels.
- Decrease exposure to dust by feeding low-dust or dust-free feeds and sprinkling or misting the livestock holding areas, corrals, or barns.
- Give animals 4 to 6 weeks to recuperate after the air quality returns to normal. The general health of the animals as well as performance may be impacted due to the exposure to smoke.
- Have a livestock evacuation plan ready. If you don't have enough trailers to quickly transport all of your animals, contact neighbors, local haulers, farmers, producers to establish a network that can provide transportation in the event of an evacuation.
- Contact the State Veterinarian if an owner needs help finding resources for transport or evacuation.
- If an owner must leave their animals, leave them in a preselected, cleared area. Leave enough hay for 48 to 72 hours. Do not rely on automatic watering systems as power may be lost.
- Increasing defensible space and minimizing fire danger through the removal of dead trees, brush, and other flammable objects can ensure protection of structures and can add valuable time that may be needed if evacuations are ordered.



Hope for the Best, Plan for the Worst

Unfortunately, for many the threat of wildfires in Nevada is always going to be around. However, giving owners information on how to plan for evacuation before the need arises could save many pets' lives.

When Active Fires are Burning Nearby:

- Ensure pets have identifying tags so if an owner and pet are separated they can be identified.
- If a collar is either not tolerated by the pet or the owner does not have one, recommend that the owner update microchip information. Many owners think the microchip is a fool-proof identifier by don't understand that they do need to ensure their contact information is associated with the chip and up-to-date.
- It is a good idea to keep the pets in the owner's room or adjacent room to where an owner will be sleeping to ensure that if needed, the owner can grab the pets and go. This is especially important if the pet is prone to running or hiding. If it is tolerated, the pet can be placed in a carrier or crate.
- Pack two bags. One for the owner and one for the pet. The bag for the pet should include medications, food for 7-10 days, fresh water, vaccination/medical records, photo of the animal in case the owner needs to prove ownership if separated, and information for their veterinarian. Some of the items can be kept in the car for ease of transport.
- Recommend that any indoor/outdoor animals be brought inside. Animals can become disoriented during a fire and if an evacuation is necessary this may be the only way a pet can be found in enough time to make an evacuation.
- If an owner must leave their pet behind, remind the owner to never tie the animal up.

After an Evacuation

- Instruct owners to monitor health closely and look out for the signs of respiratory distress.
- Check if the pet had contact with any fire or potentially toxic ashes. Inspect paw pads, skin, eyes, and fur for any signs of irritation, blisters, or burns.
- Have access to fresh water and encourage owners to make an appointment with a local veterinarian as soon as possible.
- If an owner is separated from their pet, encourage them to check local shelters or Facebook groups.
- It is important for owners to not just look at photos online as animals may appear very different if they have been in an active fire area as you can see on the right from a photo posted by San Francisco SPCA during the Camp Fire.



Quick Links for Staff and Owners:

Fact Sheet from the EPA on how to prepare for wildfires and what do in case of evacuation:

https://www3.epa.gov/airnow/smoke_fires/protect-your-pets-from-wildfire-smoke.pdf

AirNow shows the current and forecast air quality as well as interactive maps:

<https://www.airnow.gov/>

CDC Disaster Prep for Pet Checklist:

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/resources/disaster-prep-pet-emergency-checklist.pdf>

Disaster Prep Kit for Livestock/Horses:

<https://www.readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/go-evacuation-guide/animal-evacuation/>

<https://www.avma.org/resources/pet-owners/emergencycare/large-animals-and-livestock-disasters>

Upcoming Board Meetings:

Meetings are occurring via teleconference through at least January, 2021

Agendas are posted at the link below at least 3 days prior to a meeting:

https://www.nvvetboard.us/GLSuiteWeb/clients/nvbov/public/NVBOV_Information/Minutes.aspx



➔ October 22, 2020

➔ January 21, 2021

Request to join the mailing list and get info on hearings and workshops for proposed regulation changes sent directly to your inbox. Send your name and email address to mail@vetboard.nv.gov



CE CORNER

Please refer to NAC 638.042 for a complete list of the types of courses approved the Board to ensure that CE you are taking is approved.

- Free AVMA seminars online: <https://axon.avma.org/page/covid19-courses>
- Atdove.com is hosting a free 1 hour course on challenging adrenal insufficiencies on September 17: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_cEQ9TKShQnCK2WsiL_JWtQ?mc_cid=ccd5ed55b6&mc_eid=89b279f2b1
- VetFolio is offering free CE here: https://www.vetfolio.com/learn/article/free-ce-from-vetfolio?gclid=Cj0KCQjwgJv4BRCrARIsAB17JI4ejCJgAqebu0UQV--7VZSp_-Eh_1DI9kdVhi8Ncg8k2MURexlMOoaAvegEALw_wcB
- VetMedTeam List of Free CE: <https://www.vetmedteam.com/classes-free.aspx>
- NAVTA's List of Free CE: navta.net/page/continuing_education
- Pet Poison Hotline is offering a CE course on evaluating the most dangerous toxins for dogs on October 6: <https://www.petpoisonhelpline.com/webinar/worst-of-the-worst-evaluating-the-most-dangerous-toxins-for-pets/>
- Search for Board approved CE any time at <https://www.aavsb.org/RACE>