

# Pinery Horses

Supporting landholders through fire recovery



This Horse SA project provided community support for disaster recovery. It was tailored to the needs of horse property managers, following the Pinery fire.

## Horse SA

Horse SA is a community-run organisation advocating and supporting those involved in the equine industry. Horse SA works with horse owners, local communities, environmental groups and government to develop valuable projects and contribute to horse-related legislation.

Since 1999, the group has been running training courses, workshops and information sessions to build the capacity of horse owners and those in the equine industry.

Horse SA's *HorsesLandWater Action Planner* and *Horse Property Management Guidelines* were developed in conjunction with the EPA and are key documents which direct sustainable horse keeping in South Australia.

## Responding to immediate needs

In November 2015, the Pinery bushfire burnt 82,600 hectares and up to \$40 million of fodder and unharvested grain. Unfortunately, there were two human and more than 70,000 livestock fatalities (including 40 horses). Many homes, assets and properties were also destroyed. The fire had a serious impact on landholders and natural resources in the northern district of the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges region and in the Northern and Yorke region.

Following the fire, the region experienced severe dust storms which caused health issues for humans and animals, respiratory problems being the primary issue. Dust storms also continued to cause damage to homes and assets long after the fire was over.

The urgency of responses required for the fire and dust storms was the key driver in Horse SA's quick delivery of Pinery Horses. Horse SA's success in designing the program reactively meant that the content was closely tailored to the needs of those affected.



*Pinery dust storm*



Government of  
South Australia



Natural Resources  
Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges



Horse owners receiving fire recovery land management advice

## Project aims and goals

Pinery Horses was delivered in response to the Pinery fire with a series of sessions which engaged horse keepers in the management of their natural resources post-fire. It also provided an emotional support network with the project taking a holistic approach, with topics ranging from soil erosion to animal health, while being continually sensitive to the circumstances participants were in.

This project sought to improve and support:

- community members' fire recovery process
- horse health and welfare following the fire.

As a result of this project, natural resources management (NRM) outcomes were addressed, such as an increased number of landholders:

- engaged in managing the natural resources of the region
- improving their productivity by taking steps to reduce soil erosion and increase biodiversity.

## Pinery Horses support resources

Horse SA has been working tirelessly to build the horse community's capacity for sustainable horse keeping, and to develop resilience across the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM region in the face of climate change. Some key documents and resources used to support and deliver Pinery Horses were:

- Horse SA's *'Changing up the way we keep horses'* and *'Horses: People: Landcare'*, a comprehensive series of community education and capacity-building sessions to encourage sustainable horse management.
- Large Animals in Disasters Project, driven by Horse SA and funded by the BankSA/Westpac Disaster fund.
- University of Adelaide's work through the Roseworthy Equine Health and Performance Centre, regarding equine veterinary health information for fire-affected horses.

The information provided to the community through the Pinery Horses project shows how horse health research is a driver for improved land management practices.

## Fire recovery support

From January to June 2016, Horse SA delivered a range of community capacity-building events to 107 participants. The event structure was quite different to regular Horse SA events due to the circumstances being post natural disaster.

Most of the sessions were held as round-table discussions, as opposed to a lecture style delivery, which allowed attendees to share their stories in an open, safe space. Fire recovery support staff were present at all events to be a point of contact for any personal follow up assistance required. Many people took advantage of this assistance and were referred to specific services for support such as rebuilding, revegetation and power supply.

Members of the Sampson Flat community also attended these sessions as they had recently experienced bushfires in 2015 and were able to provide first-hand knowledge and peer support.

Five of the sessions were knowledge-based and focused on the following topics:

- **Erosion control and soil health**, including a visit from a Natural Resources Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges (AMLR) representative.
- **Horse health** which included internal and external parasites, vaccinations and faecal egg counts.
- **Pasture planting and shelter belts** with a tree expert and information on pre-sowing pasture preparation.
- **Pest plant and animal control** focus on weed identification, as well as which pests appear most commonly after fire and how to control them. This session also offered some horse training advice.
- **Property planning** following fire, where participants brought along their property management plan, or started one during the session.

Small property land management consultant, Andy Cole, also delivered an educational farm walk through a property in Kudla. The farm presented a good example of shelter belt planting and other features of a sustainably-managed farm. An indoor farm walk was also held, where participants viewed images of an inspirational farm and discussed how various features could be incorporated into their own properties.

To follow up the farm walk, a drop-in session was held at Sander's Fodder Gawler, where 30 landholders were able to have one-on-one time with Andy Cole and a pasture seed advisor, to obtain advice on specific land management issues.





*Sand drift after groundcover was removed during the fire*



*Eucalypts often recover after fire, seek advice about managing them appropriately*

## Disaster support networks

Participants at Horse SA's sessions and events have now formed friendships and a community network and continue to keep in touch outside of these events. The activities of this Horse SA community has also informed Country Fire Service (CFS) research regarding animals in bushfires, which will assist other regions prepare for, and respond to, natural disasters.

## Landscape resilience

Native vegetation in South Australia is adapted to cope with bushfires, helping make our landscape a resilient one. Native plants typically re-sprout or re-grow from seed so even though patches of bush in your area may look dead after a bushfire, you will soon see evidence of new growth. Allowing native vegetation to regenerate plays an important role in helping native wildlife populations recover and ensuring our landscapes stay resilient. If you have native bush on your property, seek advice on how to best manage it as part of your property management plan.

## Key lessons learnt

Through Pinery Horses, Horse SA gained significant knowledge in:

- disaster recovery insights and the needs of those affected
- event timing and structure following a disaster, namely the importance of holding at least one support event as soon as possible after the disaster
- emergency management for horse keepers, especially the importance of having a robust emergency action plan which is ready for implementation
- talking about recovery as preparation for the next disaster
- the importance of sharing veterinary health research and first aid information relating to caring for horses affected by fire. This should include immediate response with a continued plan for 6-12 months, as recovery from fire-related health problems can often take some time to become apparent.

## For more information

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