



National  
Operational  
Guidance

# Guidance

## Incidents involving animals



**NFCC**  
Fire Central  
Programme Office

Developed and maintained by the NFCC

---



# Contents

- Introduction ..... 3
  - Legislation* ..... 3
  - Risk management plan* ..... 4
  - Responsibility of fire and rescue services* ..... 5
- Hazard - Incidents involving animals ..... 5
  - Control measure - Situational awareness: Animal incidents* ..... 7
  - Control measure - Minimise the stress response of the animal* ..... 8
  - Control measure - Cordon control: Animal incidents* ..... 10
  - Control measure - Specialist resources: Animal incidents* ..... 11
  - Control measure - Safe egress: Animal incidents* ..... 13
  - Control measure - Determine an appropriate destination for the animal* ..... 13
  - Control measure - Personal protective equipment: Animal incidents* ..... 15
  - Control measure - Physical control or restraint of the animal* ..... 17
  - Control measure - Chemical restraint of the animal* ..... 18
  - Control measure - Contain the animal* ..... 20
  - Control measure - Move or lift the animal* ..... 21
  - Control measure - Euthanasia of the animal* ..... 26
- Hazard - Animals at height or depth ..... 27
- Hazard - Animal in an enclosed space ..... 28
- Hazard - Animal in a structure ..... 29
  - Control measure - Access animal in a structure* ..... 29
- Hazard - Animal in transit ..... 30
  - Control measure - Access animal in transit* ..... 31
- Hazard - Animal in water, on ice, or on unstable ground ..... 32
  - Control measure - Extrication of animal from water, ice or unstable ground* ..... 32
- Hazard - Entangled animal ..... 34
  - Control measure - Remove animal from the cause of entanglement* ..... 35
- Hazard - Animals requiring evacuation ..... 36
  - Control measure - Evacuate animals* ..... 37
- Hazard - Animal requiring immediate first aid or resuscitation ..... 38
  - Control measure - Immediate first aid for animal* ..... 38
  - Control measure - Resuscitation of animal* ..... 39



## Introduction

---

This guidance, for fire and rescue services attending incidents involving animals, is primarily about animal rescue. However, the owner of the animal, or other well-intentioned members of the public, may also be involved in the incident – they will need to be considered in the fire and rescue service's response.

Incidents involving animals may require the rescue or evacuation of an animal. This activity may present hazards to members of the public, the animal or emergency responders. Fire and rescue services, when attending an incident involving animals, may need to:

- Carry out physical animal handling or movement
- Collaborate with other agencies, specialist resources and animal rescue teams
- Interact with the owner of the animal
- Deal with members of the public

Memoranda of understanding (MoUs) may be established, or mutual aid may be in place, that can be called on to support interoperability.

Traditionally, fire and rescue services have developed separate policies and procedures for large animal rescues and small animal rescues. This guidance takes a more holistic approach, as the hazards and control measures are often the same or very similar, regardless of the size of animal involved.

However, if fire and rescue services wish to continue with developing separate policies and procedures, this guidance will support that approach.

The nature of an incident involving animals, taking into account factors such as the species involved and the environment the animal is in, may identify the level of competency of the fire and rescue service personnel who should attend.

Some of the control measures in this guidance, for example the techniques for moving or lifting animals, require specialist skills. Summaries of those techniques have been provided as a reminder about their use, but should not be seen as a substitute for training and practice.



## Legislation

---

Fire and rescue services should have an awareness of animal-related legislation that may affect operational decisions. For a list of the legislation, along with a link to the National Operational Guidance: Legislation, see the Legislation references.

Consideration should be given to:

- [Animal Welfare Act](#)
- [Animal Health and Welfare \(Scotland\) Act](#)
- [Welfare of Animals Act \(Northern Ireland\)](#)

An important premise of these Acts is that the person who owns an animal shall always be regarded as being responsible for it. However, another person can be responsible for the animal on a temporary basis; this could include a fire and rescue service.

- [Protection of Badgers Act](#)
- [Nature Conservation \(Scotland\) Act](#)
- [Wildlife and Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act](#)
- [Wildlife \(Northern Ireland\) Order](#), as amended by the [Wildlife and Natural Environment Act \(Northern Ireland\)](#)

In all incidents involving badger setts, the relevant animal welfare charity should be contacted for advice or assistance. Permission will be required before interfering with a sett, for example to rescue a dog that has not been able to extricate itself after a reasonable period of time.

Fire and rescue services need to be aware of the legislation regarding the release of non-native wildlife into the wild, contained in:

- [Wildlife and Countryside Act](#)
- [Wildlife and Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act](#)
- [Wildlife and Natural Environment Act \(Northern Ireland\)](#)

As a special licence for the release of these animals is required, the relevant animal welfare charity should be contacted for advice or assistance.

Fire and rescue services may encounter illegally-imported animals during an incident. If activity contravening [CITES \(Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora\)](#) is suspected, the relevant animal welfare charity and the police should be contacted.



## Risk management plan

---

Each fire and rescue authority must develop their strategic direction through their risk management plan. To determine the extent of their services, strategic managers will consider their statutory duties and the foreseeable risk within their area.

Work to identify risk and prepare operational plans should consider all stakeholders, including local emergency planning groups and the fire and rescue service risk management plan.



## Responsibility of fire and rescue services

---

Fire and rescue services are responsible, under legislation and regulations, for developing policies and procedures and to provide information, instruction, training and supervision to their personnel about foreseeable hazards and the control measures used to mitigate the risks arising from those hazards.

This guidance sets out to provide fire and rescue services with sufficient knowledge about the potential hazards their personnel could encounter when attending incidents involving animals. Fire and rescue services should ensure their policies, procedures and training cover all of the hazards and control measures contained in this guidance.



## Hazard - Incidents involving animals

---

### **Hazard Knowledge**

This section contains generic control measures that may be appropriate when dealing with any incident involving animals, whatever the species, size or location.

### **Animal instinct and behaviour**

When approaching animals, or working where animals are present, emergency responders need to understand animal instinct, behaviour and mental abilities. When feeling threatened or fearful,



animals react on instinct and have natural defence mechanisms. This may result in unwanted or unpredictable behaviour, such as panic or aggression, commonly referred to as the 'fight or flight' response.

The reaction of an animal to a perceived threat will depend on:

- The species of the animal, including its defence mechanisms and its protective nature towards offspring or its group
- The group or herd dynamics
- The nature of the entrapment or perceived threat
- Levels of stimulation, including the light, noise and movement of operational activity
- Environmental conditions
- The level of fear the animal is experiencing
- Whether the animal is ill, injured or in pain
- Whether the animal has previously been handled by, or had contact with, people
- The animal's previous positive or negative experience with people

Failure to understand and anticipate the behaviour of animals may present a risk to human life, an immediate threat to safety, or harm to the animal; this may have a negative impact on implementing the tactical plan. The animal's behaviour may restrict or block the access, egress and escape routes for emergency responders and vehicles.

### **Health hazards relating to animals**

Health hazards relating to animals may be encountered at any incident. However, attending an incident where there is direct or close contact with an animal will amplify those hazards.

The health hazards to fire and rescue service personnel range from physical injuries, through to the transmission of zoonoses (diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans) and biohazards, based on the species involved.

There is a legal obligation to report the presence or suspicion of a notifiable disease in animals. Refer to [www.gov.uk/government/collections/notifiable-diseases-in-animals](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/notifiable-diseases-in-animals) for further information.

Following contact with animals, it is important that fire and rescue service personnel pay close attention to hygiene, carry out appropriate decontamination and seek specialist advice if necessary.

For information on this hazard and its control measures, refer to the National Operational Guidance: Operations – Physical hazards.

### **Presence of people**

There are many incidents involving animals where the owner of the animal, or other members of the public, put themselves at risk in an effort to rescue an animal. In attempting to do this, especially in a hazardous environment, people may in turn need rescuing.

For guidance on rescuing people, refer to the National Operational Guidance: Performing rescues and the National Operational Guidance: Water rescue and flooding.



## Control measure - Situational awareness: Animal incidents

---

### Control measure knowledge

Gathering information about the animal involved in the incident will help to inform the quantity and type of fire and rescue service resources required. Information sources include:

- The caller contacting the fire and rescue service – this could be a member of the public, an animal welfare charity or another organisation
- The animal itself, as identification markers may help to identify the owner
- The owner of the animal, who may or may not be at the scene of the incident

### Caller information

Information gathered from the caller should include:

- The environment that the animal is in – whether it is at height, in an enclosed space, in a structure, in transit, on ice, or on unstable ground
- For an animal in water – whether the water is still or moving, above or below knee deep, inland or coastal
- If the animal is trapped, the nature of entrapment or entanglement
- The number of animals involved
- The species of animal
- The size of the animal – whether it is larger or heavier than an adult human
- The condition of the animal – whether it is conscious, aggressive or injured

The information gathered should also include:

- Whether the owner of the animal is at the scene of the incident, or if not, whether they are contactable



- Whether any members of the public are involved with the incident, for example, attempting to rescue the animal

### **Animal identification**

Identification markers on or with the animal could include:

- Microchips
- Collar tags
- Branding
- Tattoos
- Ear tags
- Pet passports or other documents

### **Owner information**

Information gathered from the owner should include:

- Pre-existing medical conditions of the animal
- The age of the animal
- The animal's usual behaviour, although this may not reflect its behaviour when distressed
- Restraint methods the animal is used to

### **Strategic actions**

Fire and rescue services should:

- Ensure their fire control room prompts call information about animal-related incidents and passes this to responding fire and rescue service personnel

### **Tactical actions**

Incident commanders should:

- Attempt to identify the owner of the animal
- Liaise with the owner of the animal, or the person with temporary responsibility for the animal, to gather information about it





## Control measure - Minimise the stress response of the animal

---

### Control measure knowledge

In many cases the stress response of an animal is caused by lights, noise, intrusion or pain.

To minimise the stress response of the animal, it is important to reduce or avoid the use of lights and noise. This should be considered when approaching and arriving at the scene of the incident, for example, by turning off flashing lights and preventing the use of audible warning devices as soon as is practicable.

When close to the animal, movements of emergency responders, equipment and vehicles should be kept to a minimum and carried out slowly. Emergency responders should also avoid unnecessary contact with the animal.

It may be possible to distract some animals with food, toys, familiar people or other objects. Some animals may be calmer if they maintain contact with other companion animals.

### Scene lighting

Refer to National Operational Guidance: Operations for generic information about scene lighting. However, for incidents involving animals, the benefits of scene lighting need to be assessed against the potential stress caused to the animal.

### Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services must:

- Ensure their fire control room includes information about the presence of animals to responding fire and rescue service personnel

### Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:



- Ensure emergency responders understand the importance of minimising the stress response of the animal
- Control the use of lights and minimise noise in the vicinity of the animal
- Keep movements of emergency responders, equipment and vehicles to a minimum in the vicinity of the animal
- Avoid unnecessary contact with the animal



## Control measure - Cordon control: Animal incidents

---

### Control measure knowledge

The hazard area should be based on:

- The species, size and behaviour of the animal
- The kick zones and head butt zones of equines, bovines and larger animals; these may be extensive and will vary depending on whether the animal is:
  - Lying or standing
  - Mobile or trapped
- The potential for crush injuries, especially between the animal and walls, fences or vehicles
- The environment the animal is in
- The presence of other animals

The hazard area should be reviewed if the animal moves from its original location or if its behaviour changes.

### Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Ensure that if any information regarding animals is contained in Site-Specific Risk Information (SSRI), that it is made available to responding personnel

## Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Consider information provided by the owner of the animal, or the person with temporary responsibility for the animal, when determining the size of the cordon



## Control measure - Specialist resources: Animal incidents

---

### Control measure knowledge

Using specialist resources may be essential for some types of incident or some species of animal. It is also important to consider the need for immediate veterinary surgeon attendance for safety and tactical planning, as well as to determine the viability and welfare of the animal.

In addition to fire and rescue service animal rescue specialists, other specialist resources for incidents involving animals include:

- Veterinary surgeons
- Veterinary organisations
- Animal welfare charities
- Animal rescue organisations
- Animal keepers or handlers
- Environmental specialists
- Water rescue specialists
- Search and rescue organisations
- Local authorities (who may have dedicated animal welfare officers)
- Police dog handlers
- Police firearms teams
- Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA)
- Specialist mud rescue services for coastal areas
- Government departments responsible for the natural environment
- Tree surgeons
- Roofing companies
- Fencing companies

- Utility providers

Attendance of specialist resources, especially veterinary surgeons, should not be delayed until the animal is medically compromised. The presence of a veterinary surgeon may be beneficial for carrying out triage and tactical planning, and essential for chemical restraint.

If the animal is captive, for example in a commercial location such as a farm, zoo or laboratory, keepers or handlers may be able to assist. Further information about the presence of captive animals can be found in the National Operational Guidance: Industry.

Although not necessarily a specialist resource, the owner of the animal may be able to assist with the incident, based on their knowledge and ability. Their assistance could include:

- Explaining the cause of the incident
- Keeping the animal calm
- Identifying an appropriate destination for the released or evacuated animal
- Arranging for their vet to attend the incident

## Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Maintain a directory of specialist resources for incidents involving animals
- Maintain or have access to a directory of veterinary surgeons

Fire and rescue services must:

- Be aware of directories maintained by other organisations, for example a list of veterinary surgeons registered with the British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) or with the British Animal Rescue and Trauma Care Association (BARTA)

## Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Identify the need for specialist resources and request their attendance or assistance
- Ensure the specialist resources are deployed appropriately and understand their role



- Consider using the assistance of the owner of the animal



## Control measure - Safe egress: Animal incidents

---

### Control measure knowledge

Due to the unpredictable behaviour of all animals, and the weight and power of larger animals, it is important to maintain a safe egress route. The egress route should enable emergency responders to move out of the hazard area if the animal is likely to cause harm to them.

### Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Consider providing equipment that can be used to indicate the safe egress route

### Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Identify and maintain a safe egress route when dealing with an animal
- Ensure emergency responders and others attending the incident are all made aware of the safe egress route



## Control measure - Determine an appropriate destination for the animal

---



## Control measure knowledge

The release or evacuation of an animal in an uncontrolled manner could worsen the existing incident, or cause a secondary incident, resulting in harm to people or the animal. The animal may behave unpredictably on its release; if it has a herding instinct it may try to return to other familiar animals.

An appropriate destination for the animal should be identified prior to operational activity to carry out its release or evacuation. However, private land should not be used without the permission of the landowner.

Managing to identify the owner of the animal is likely to assist with the incident, as they can be involved in decisions that need to be made about the animal. Sources of owner identification could include microchips, collar tags, branding, tattoos or ear tags.

Before an incident can be closed, the released or evacuated animal needs to be handed over to its owner, if they are present. If the owner is not present, or if there is no owner, the animal should be placed into the care of a suitable person or organisation.

If the animal is in transit, an alternative form of transport may need to be sourced, so that the animal can be transferred and transported.

## Onward transportation of an animal

The [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1/2005](#) deals with the protection of animals during transport and related operations. In particular Annex 1, Chapter I provides the criteria for whether an animal is fit for the intended journey. For example, the animal should be able to move independently without pain or walk unassisted and should not have severe open wounds. There are also age limitations for the transport of animals.

However, sick or injured animals may be considered fit for transport if they are slightly injured or ill and transport would not cause additional suffering. This decision should preferably be taken by a veterinary surgeon.

A sick or injured animal may be transported under veterinary supervision for, or following, veterinary treatment or diagnosis. However, the transportation of the animal is only allowed if the animal is not subjected to unnecessary suffering or ill treatment.

Annex 1, Chapter II of the regulations provides details about the means of transport. For example, it should be designed, constructed, maintained and operated so as to avoid injury and suffering and to ensure the safety of the animal. It should also protect the animal from inclement weather, extreme temperatures and adverse changes in climatic conditions.



## Strategic actions

## Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Be aware that the animal may attempt to return to other familiar animals on its release
- Attempt to identify the owner of the animal
- Liaise with the owner of the animal, or the person with temporary responsibility for the animal, to identify an appropriate destination for the released or evacuated animal
- Determine an appropriate destination for the released or evacuated animal, using local knowledge or information gathered in scene surveys
- Seek permission of the landowner before releasing or evacuating an animal onto private land

Incident commanders must:

- Not allow a sick or injured animal to be transported if it is unable to move independently without pain or walk unassisted, or if it has a severe open wound; in this situation the animal must be placed into the care of a veterinary surgeon, who may authorise its transportation



## Control measure - Personal protective equipment: Animal incidents

---

## Control measure knowledge

The use of specialist personal protective equipment (PPE) when dealing with animals may be beneficial as:

- Regular firefighting PPE may not provide the protection required if an animal tries to defend itself
- Additional protection may be required, due to the working environment or the nature of the animal's entrapment
- Zoonoses or biohazards may contaminate clothing or PPE, which could then be transferred

Specialist PPE should allow for decontamination at the incident ground, or containment of the specialist PPE for later decontamination or disposal.

Specialist PPE for incidents involving animals includes:

- Bite and scratch resistant gloves
- Animal incident helmets
- Body, face and eye protection
- Additional outer clothing, such as overalls, environmental protection suits or dry suits
- Riot shields

Personnel should be aware that some PPE may cause distress in animals, for example if it is smoke-contaminated.

## Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Consider providing specialist PPE for incidents involving animals

## Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Ensure fire and rescue service personnel wear appropriate PPE
- Ensure that the PPE worn does not add to the distress of the animal



- Implement appropriate hygiene procedures for personnel
- Consider decontamination of PPE



## Control measure - Physical control or restraint of the animal

---

### Control measure knowledge

It may be necessary to control or restrain the animal using physical methods; this may need to be carried out in conjunction with chemical restraint methods.

Physical control or restraint may be essential in some situations, for example:

- To prevent worsening of an incident, especially if human life or safety is involved
- To enable an entrapped animal to be released
- To remove the animal from a place of danger to a place of safety
- To prevent injury to emergency responders
- When administering first aid to the animal

Before attempting to physically gain control or restraint of an animal, the activity should be risk assessed, including the following considerations:

- The species, size and behaviour of the animal
- The impact on the animal in terms of potential injury or distress
- The environment
- The resources and equipment available

Physically controlling or restraining an animal may include using equipment such as:

- Muzzles
  - May be purpose-made or improvised, and often used for dogs
  - Assessment of the animal will determine the type of muzzle required
- Slip leads
  - Can be used to control a non-aggressive dog
  - Can be used as a pair, one from each side of the animal, (known as double leading) to provide additional control



- Rigid leads or graspers
  - Should be used if the behaviour of a dog is unknown
  - Can be used for some wild animals, such as foxes and badgers
  - Can be used as a pair to provide additional control
- Snake tongs or graspers
  - Can be used to capture and restrain snakes and other animals, such as cats
- Nets
  - Can be used for many species of smaller animals, but need to be suitable for the size and strength of the animal
  - May be of a traditional hoop, triangle or square type
  - Other types, such as throw nets or 'walk toward' nets can be used
- Extension poles
  - Lightweight, interlocking, aluminium poles that can provide additional reach when controlling or restraining an animal
  - Capture or restraining equipment, such as graspers or nets, can be attached to the extension poles
- Towels, cloths or blankets
  - May be purpose-made or improvised, and can assist with the capture and control of a range of smaller animals and deer
  - Covering the head or eyes may calm some species
- Halters
  - May be purpose-made or improvised, and are mainly used to control the head of larger domesticated animals, or if the animal is being chemically restrained
  - Can be used for smaller livestock such as goats, sheep and young bovines
- Head collars
  - Purpose-made devices, in a range of sizes, primarily for the head control of equines

## Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Consider providing equipment appropriate for physically controlling or restraining an animal

## Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Consider using appropriate methods or equipment to physically control or restrain the animal



## Control measure - Chemical restraint of the animal

---

### Control measure knowledge

Chemical restraint, through the use of veterinary drugs, has to be administered by a specialist, such as a veterinary surgeon.

Chemical restraint methods may be used to:

- Reduce responsiveness through sedation – sedation reduces the responsiveness of an animal but does not produce unconsciousness; the animal may still react to stimulation
- Totally immobilise through anaesthesia – this may be used if the nature of the incident requires additional control; it can be delivered by injection, blow pipe or dart gun

The effects and timescales of chemical restraint will vary depending on the method, dosage and levels of stimulation experienced by the animal, before and during its rescue. It may be necessary for the chemical restraint to remain effective after rescuing the animal, for example to assist with taking it to an appropriate destination.

A suitable and safe anaesthesia recovery area will need to be identified for the animal to remain in, until it has sufficiently recovered from the effects of the anaesthetic.

The drugs and administering equipment, such as needles and syringes, used to carry out chemical restraint are extremely hazardous. The veterinary surgeon has responsibility for the safety of these items, but emergency responders should be made aware of their presence.

### Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Maintain or have access to a directory of veterinary surgeons

### Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:



- Be aware of directories maintained by other organisations, for example a list of veterinary surgeons registered with the British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) or with the British Animal Rescue and Trauma Care Association (BARTA)
- Request a veterinary surgeon if chemical restraint is required
- Liaise with the veterinary surgeon about the level and duration of chemical restraint that is required and to identify a suitable and safe anaesthesia recovery area
- Ensure that emergency responders are made aware of the presence of veterinary drugs and administering equipment, such as needles and syringes, used for chemical restraint



## Control measure - Contain the animal

---

### Control measure knowledge

Animals may need to be contained if they present a hazard, or if they need to be kept in a place of safety. It may be necessary to contain an individual animal or a group of animals; the method used may be purpose-made or improvised.

When improvising a containment structure, it should be of sufficient strength and of an appropriate design for the animal or animals to be contained safely.

Animals contained individually may exhibit greater signs of stress than animals contained in a compatible group; this may challenge the containment method.

If it is necessary to contain an animal for a length of time, consideration should be given to providing adequate ventilation, water and suitable food, and protection from the weather. Veterinary or other specialist advice about containment should be obtained at the earliest opportunity.

Containing the animal will vary depending on the species, the environment and the equipment available. Types of containment include:

- Primary containment of larger animals
  - Carried out using purpose-made or improvised fencing, or a similar barrier, which is of



- sufficient strength and size to contain the animal or animals
- Containment should reduce the undue stress or potential injury of the animal
- Primary containment may also refer to purpose-built or permanent animal facilities
- Secondary containment of larger animals
  - Methods of holding animals in a place of safety, away from sources of stimulation
  - Animals may be held in this area using personnel as an effective barrier to escape, or by using physical barriers such as temporary or electric fencing
- Physical containment
  - Containment of smaller animals in purpose-made boxes, cages or animal carriers
  - Other bag-like items can be used, such as a sleeping bag or a swan bag
- Containment in vehicles or trailers
  - If purpose-made and suitable (as detailed in Annex 1, Chapter II of The Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005), these can be used for animals
  - Using vehicles or trailers for containment may not be appropriate in hot weather, as animals can quickly start to suffer from hyperthermia

## Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Consider providing equipment appropriate for containing animals

## Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Use appropriate places or equipment to contain the animal
- Request veterinary or other specialist advice about containment
- Monitor the welfare of an animal that has been contained



## Control measure - Move or lift the animal

---

## Control measure knowledge

If an animal needs to be moved or lifted, the equipment and techniques used by emergency responders should:

- Minimise contact with the animal
- Consider the welfare of the animal
- Avoid injury to the animal
- Avoid unnecessary suffering of the animal

The safe moving or lifting of an animal, especially a large animal, will need to take into account the number of emergency responders who are available and able to move or lift the animal. The activity may require additional resources or the use of specialist equipment.

Refer to National Operational Guidance: Operations, Control measure – [Adopt correct manual handling techniques](#), for further information about manual handling.

Animals may be moved by:

- Leading or herding the animals
- Sliding or manipulating an animal, either manually or with mechanical equipment
- Lifting or carrying an animal, either manually or with mechanical equipment

Moving or lifting animals should use the simplest method deemed appropriate and suitable; this is likely to be the quickest and safest for the animal and the emergency responders.

Animals that need to be lifted may benefit from chemical restraint, due to the physical and mental stimulation of the rescue. Heavy sedation or anaesthesia is the default for large animals that require lifting, therefore a veterinary surgeon should normally attend the incident if this activity needs to take place.

However, any lifting of animals should be subject to a risk assessment. It may be necessary to proceed with the lift before a veterinary surgeon arrives at the scene of the incident; for example, to preserve human life or in situations when human safety or animal viability could be compromised by waiting for veterinary attendance.

## Equipment

Equipment used to move or lift an animal should eliminate any danger of strangulation or injury, and should always allow the quick release of the animal. This equipment, where available and assessed to be appropriate, includes:

- Mechanical devices



- Their use will need to be assessed, based on the suitability of the site, the type of mechanical device, the conditions and the task
- The load will need to be calculated and mechanical advantage used if required, with the correct application of lifting and winching equipment
- HIAB crane, telehandler or equivalent lifting device
  - The equipment should be operated by a competent person; their competency for the task should be assessed prior to commencing lifting operations
  - Fire and rescue service personnel should operate at an appropriate distance from the equipment
  - Lunge lines or general purpose lines can be used to help control the load
- Slings
  - Polyester flat woven duplex slings can be used when extricating large animals, for example from ditches or bogs, using approved techniques
- Suspension harnesses
  - Can be used to lift and suspend a bovine or equine, during which time it can receive veterinary treatment and may regain its ability to stand unaided
  - A suspension harness can be used in rescue situations if appropriate, especially where a greater degree of support for the animal is required
- Rescue glides
  - Can be used to move recumbent animals, especially if skidding techniques cannot be used due to ground conditions or the required distance to travel
  - Allow for easier pulling, as the smooth surface of the glides is in contact with the ground and can be interlinked to deal with very large animals
  - Have a strapping system to secure the animal onto the glide, to prevent it rolling off or moving, especially over rough terrain or longer distances
- Hobbles
  - Are used to restrain the limbs of a large animal during a rescue and can be used to lift a large animal by its limbs if necessary

## Manual manipulation techniques

The following techniques are usually carried out without mechanical advantage. They are simple to perform and require minimal equipment, however a quick release mechanism should be used. Manual manipulation of large animals may present the safest option for human safety and animal welfare.

The following recognised techniques form part of the training for large animal rescue:

- Forward skid
  - Easy to apply to an animal in a restricted space
  - Can be used for limited vertical movement
  - Avoids traction on the animal's head or legs, but does apply direct pressure around one



area of the torso

- Forward assist
  - Similar to the forward skid, and can be used to assist an animal that is ambulatory but unable to negotiate an incline or obstacle
  - Allows the animal handler to guide, encourage and assist the animal
- Backward skid
  - Avoids using the animal's legs, tail or head for traction and can be used to manoeuvre animals through narrow gaps
  - Applies a lot of pressure around one area of the torso
- Sideways skid
  - Avoids the torso rolling (which can result in stimulation of the animal) and provides a lot of manoeuvrability
  - Having two points of contact minimises the pressure on the animal's torso with the effort spread between two lines of emergency responders
- Barrel skid
  - Can be used to raise a standing animal where steep sides prevent a sideways skid
  - Can be applied from one side of the animal if required
- Rollover or controlled rollover
  - Provides an effective method of rolling an animal
  - Can be carried out on most sizes of animal with the minimum number of personnel
- Hobbled dorsal rollover
  - An option for quickly moving an animal that is lying on its back (dorsally recumbent)
  - Use of this technique may be appropriate if the animal is trapping a casualty, or if the animal is in danger

The ground onto which an animal is skidded should be grassed or similar. If skidding an animal onto abrasive ground is unavoidable, hard protection should be positioned between the animal and the abrasive surface.

### **Mechanical techniques**

If not operated correctly or within animal rescue protocols, using mechanical lifting equipment can cause significant injury or harm to emergency responders or the animal. However, with correct tactical planning, it can be the safest and most appropriate rescue method.

Particular care should be taken when working with other agencies who are operating machinery. Safe working systems will need to be selected under the guidance of the animal rescue team leader, veterinary surgeon and incident commander.

The following recognised techniques and equipment form part of the training for large animal rescue:





- Rescue slings set
  - A system to stop a large animal for a vertical lift, providing anti-spill straps and quick-release couplings
  - Can be used with a mechanical lifting device for a combination lift and skid
  - Due to the pressure on the animal's abdomen, the maximum recommended suspension time is five minutes
- Medical suspension harness
  - Can be used for rescues based on the medical or anatomical requirements of the animal
  - Can be used post-rescue to help an animal to stand, and can be left in place for up to two hours if required
- Hobbled lift
  - Can be used to quickly recover an animal, including equines and bovines, lying on its back (dorsally recumbent)
  - Should be carried out under full anaesthesia, unless there is an emergency, such as the animal trapping a casualty

## Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Consider providing equipment appropriate for moving or lifting animals

## Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Determine the most appropriate technique for moving or lifting the animal
- Select the most appropriate equipment and ensure it is used effectively and safely
- Liaise with a veterinary surgeon to ensure sufficient control of the animal is in place prior to moving or lifting, such as chemical restraint
- Ensure that the animal's limbs are free from obstruction before lifting; a quick release mechanism should be used

- Have a contingency plan that can be implemented if the animal manoeuvres itself, resulting in the initial moving or lifting plan being unachievable



## Control measure - Euthanasia of the animal

---

### Control measure knowledge

A person with responsibility for an animal may commit an offence if an act, or failure to act, causes an animal to suffer unnecessarily. Therefore, the need for euthanasia should be considered within any tactical plan at an incident involving animals. This decision will be influenced by a number of considerations including:

- The safety of the emergency responders or animal
- Welfare decisions, such as the severity of the animal's injuries
- Views of the owner of the animal, which could be based on commercial rationale

Methods of euthanasia include:

- Chemical euthanasia
- Gun shot
- Captive-bolt stunner

Euthanasia can be carried out by:

- Veterinary surgeons
- Animal welfare charities
- Police firearms teams

Fire and rescue services will not make the decision about whether an animal is euthanised. However, from a safety and welfare perspective, the incident commander will need to be involved in the decision about where and how the animal will be euthanised.

Further information about the euthanasia of animals, and the permissions required, can be found on the [Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons website](#) and in the [RSPCA's euthanasia statement](#).

To avoid distress to the public, or to prevent filming, it may be appropriate to screen off the area where the animal will be euthanised. This will also provide a degree of privacy to those carrying out the task.

## Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Maintain or have access to a directory of veterinary surgeons
- Be aware of directories maintained by other organisations, for example a list of veterinary surgeons registered with the British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) or with the British Animal Rescue and Trauma Care Association (BARTA)
- Consider providing fire and rescue service vehicles with the equipment that could be used to provide adequate screening for the euthanasia of an animal, for example:
  - Salvage sheets
  - Tarpaulins
  - Canvas screens

## Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Consider the impact that euthanising the animal will have on the incident; this will need to take into account the location and method for euthanising the animal
- Communicate the location and method for euthanising the animal to emergency responders
- Consider using appropriate equipment to screen the animal from the view of the public or media
- Consider extending cordons to a sufficient distance to prevent photography or filming of this activity





## Hazard - Animals at height or depth

---

### Hazard Knowledge

An animal may appear to need to be rescued at height, such as from trees, roofs, transmission towers (pylons) or other tall structures. An animal may also appear to need to be rescued from depth, for example if it has fallen from ground level. Many animals, such as birds or cats, that are at height or depth may be able to extricate themselves, and should be encouraged to do so.

However, if an animal welfare charity or other specialist confirms that the animal needs to be rescued, or if there is a danger that members of the public may try to intervene, fire and rescue services may need to respond to the incident.

The animal may suffer from additional stress if there are large numbers of emergency responders deployed to carry out its rescue from height or depth.



## Hazard - Animal in an enclosed space

---

### Hazard Knowledge

It may be necessary to extricate many species of animals from enclosed spaces. In addition to dealing with the hazard presented by the animal, there will be the generic hazards of working in enclosed spaces.

Working in enclosed spaces can present difficulties in accessing the animal. It may also limit the resources that can be deployed to extricate the animal. The environment may be dark and present difficulties for communication. The use of scene lighting may result in additional stress for the animal.

Working in close proximity to the animal may increase its adrenalin levels and make its behaviour more unpredictable. The animal may suffer from additional stress if there are large numbers of emergency responders deployed to carry out its rescue from an enclosed space.

For details of equipment and techniques, refer to the control measure, [Move or lift the animal](#); this



activity may be more difficult when extricating an animal from an enclosed space.



## Hazard - Animal in a structure

---

### Hazard Knowledge

The following hazard should be read in conjunction with the National Operational Guidance: Sub-surface, height, structures and confined spaces.

Animals may become trapped in a structure, commonly due to them breaching walls, ceilings or floors; they could also become trapped in a collapsed structure.

If an animal has become trapped behind a wall, above a ceiling or under a floor, it may be necessary to break through building elements. If this has to be carried out, it should be done with regard to the structural integrity of the building to avoid causing a secondary incident.

Working in a structure has similarities to working in an enclosed space, therefore the hazard knowledge for dealing with an [Animal in an enclosed space](#) will apply.



## Control measure - Access animal in a structure

---

### Control measure knowledge

Before attempting to extricate an animal from a structure, it will be necessary to gain the permission (and indemnity, if appropriate) of the owner of the building, or the police, if damage may be caused.

If permission is granted, appropriate resources and equipment should be used to break through building elements to create space. This should be followed by using the appropriate manual manipulation techniques or mechanical techniques.

### Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:



- Ensure fire and rescue service personnel understand that permission (and indemnity, if appropriate) is required from the owner of the building, or the police, before gaining access to an animal in a structure

## Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Obtain permission (and indemnity, if appropriate) from the owner of the building, or the police, prior to commencing operational activity
- Select the appropriate resources and equipment to break through building elements to create space
- Use the appropriate manual manipulation techniques or mechanical techniques to extricate the animal



## Hazard - Animal in transit

---

### Hazard Knowledge

The following hazard should be read in conjunction with the [National Operational Guidance: Transport](#).

Animals in transit may become trapped in or by a form of transport, including:

- As a result of a road traffic collision
- Within a horse box or trailer
- Within a livestock transporter

Being trapped in or by a form of transport is likely to increase the stress level of the animal, especially if vehicles are moving near them.

When gaining entry to a vehicle in an emergency, it may not be evident that it contains an animal. The animal may be aggressive towards emergency responders if it feels threatened or scared, or it could escape onto the transport network where it could cause a secondary incident.

Working in a form of transport has similarities to working in an enclosed space, therefore the hazard knowledge for dealing with an [Animal in an enclosed space](#) will apply.



## Control measure - Access animal in transit

---

### Control measure knowledge

Before attempting to extricate an animal from a form of transport, it will be necessary to gain the permission of the registered keeper of the vehicle, or the police, if damage may be caused.

If permission is granted, appropriate resources and equipment should be used to gain access to the vehicle to create space. This should be followed by using the appropriate manual manipulation techniques or mechanical techniques.

Guidance for gaining access to vehicles, including using cutting and spreading tools, can be found in the [National Operational Guidance: Performing rescues – Hazard: Rescue tools](#).

### Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Ensure fire and rescue service personnel understand that permission is required from the registered keeper of the vehicle, or the police, before gaining access to an animal in a form of transport

### Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Obtain permission from the registered keeper of the vehicle, or the police, prior to commencing operational activity
- Select the appropriate resources and equipment to gain access to the vehicle to create space



- Use the appropriate manual manipulation techniques or mechanical techniques to extricate the animal



## Hazard - Animal in water, on ice, or on unstable ground

---

### Hazard Knowledge

An animal may appear to need to be rescued from water, ice or unstable ground. Many animals, such as dogs in water, may be able to extricate themselves and should be encouraged to do so. It may also be the case that an animal can be safely left in position, if the water surrounding it will recede or subside in a reasonable period of time.

If an animal welfare charity or other specialist confirms that the animal needs to be rescued, or if there is a danger that members of the public may try to intervene, the fire and rescue service may need to respond to the incident. However, it may not be viable to rescue the animal, for example, if it is in swift water.

It may be very challenging to access, control and rescue an animal from water, ice or unstable ground. Maintaining an egress route throughout the incident may also be difficult.

An animal could be entangled below the surface of the water, ice or unstable ground, for example by tree roots or debris. The animal's limbs could also be in an unexpected position. Both of these possibilities should be investigated prior to attempting extrication, in order to avoid further injury to the animal.

Animals may be numbed by the temperature of the water, ice or unstable ground they are submerged in; they may not react to the impact of tools being used to extricate them. This could result in serious injury to the animal.



## Control measure - Extrication of animal from water, ice or unstable ground

---





## Control measure knowledge

Animals can swim to varying degrees, but may tire quickly and may not swim in a safe direction.

It may be possible to rescue smaller animals with a reach option, using specialist equipment such as nets or graspers. Emergency responders should exercise extreme caution when trying to get an animal, such as a dog, into a boat; suitable restraint and containment equipment should be used at all times.

By using inflated hoses, throwlines or other means, large animals, such as equines and bovines, can be driven or guided towards their herd, higher ground or another place of safety. This may need to be done if there are multiple animals in a flood situation, where it would not be feasible to rescue each animal. Equines and bovines will require a shallow incline to exit water, but may have to be extricated using manual manipulation or mechanical techniques.

If an animal has walked onto ice and fallen through it into water, it may be necessary to form a channel to use as a rescue path, using ice-breaking equipment. Carrying this out prior to attempting a rescue will help emergency responders trying to lead or herd the animal to a place of safety.

If carrying out an animal rescue on or near unstable ground, including mud flats, the provision of rescue paths for access and egress need to be carefully planned and implemented.

Before extricating the animal from water, ice or unstable ground, check that it is not entangled below the surface. Its limbs should be checked, to ensure they are not in an expected position. Failure to do these checks before moving or lifting the animal could result in further injury to it. If it has been entangled, the hazard knowledge and control measures for dealing with an [Entangled animal](#) will apply.

## Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Consider providing appropriate specialist equipment for rescuing animals from water, ice or unstable ground

## Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:



- Consider using appropriate specialist equipment for rescuing an animal from water, ice or unstable ground
- Ensure that caution is exercised when using tools to extricate an animal submerged in water, ice or unstable ground
- Check the animal for entanglement or unexpected limb positions prior to extrication



## Hazard - Entangled animal

---

### Hazard Knowledge

Animals may become entangled by various items including:

- Fencing – electric, high tensile electric, barbed wire or razor wire
- Snares or traps
- Cattle grids
- Electric cables
- Telegraph lines
- Fishing wire
- Nets
- Trees, including their root structures

In addition to dealing with the hazard presented by the animal, other hazards may include:

- Electricity – for further information refer to the National Operational Guidance: Utilities and fuel
- Sharp metal
- Biohazards, especially if the animal is injured

### High tensile (H-T or HT) fencing

High tensile (H-T or HT) fencing is a special hard, springy steel wire that presents a significant hazard. The wire may be a single strand plain or barbed wire, or woven mesh, and is capable of much higher tension than mild steel. It permits the use of wider post gaps and is not easily stretched by animals, fallen trees or branches. It can be insulated and electrified. Unless unavoidable, high tensile fencing should not be interfered with or cut.



## Cattle grids

A cattle grid comprises rows of metal bars, usually set into the road surface to prevent animals such as cattle, sheep, goats and deer from crossing it. Cattle grids can be made from circular hollow section tubes through to heavy-duty steel.

If a large animal attempts to cross a cattle grid, it may become entangled, resulting in severe injuries that require treatment by a veterinary surgeon. Equines are particularly vulnerable to cattle grid injuries; their legs may slip down between the grids into the area below. This may lead to their legs being broken, especially if they panic when trying to extricate themselves.



## Control measure - Remove animal from the cause of entanglement

---

### Control measure knowledge

Some causes of entanglement may be easily removed by cutting, such as fishing wire or nets. However, consideration should be given to manipulating the animal away from the cause of entanglement, especially if cutting or spreading would require specialist resources or equipment.

### High tensile (H-T or HT) fencing

If it is not possible to avoid cutting high tensile fencing, consider first de-tensioning it.

### Cattle grids

Hydraulic spreaders or cutters may be required in order to create sufficient space in the cattle grid for the entangled animal to be manipulated or lifted out of the grid.

If the animal is entangled in a heavy-duty cattle grid, specialist rescue equipment may be required, such as a hot cutting torch that can cut through thick steel.

### Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Consider providing equipment appropriate for removing the cause of entanglement



## Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Consider the best course of action; manipulate the animal away from the cause of entanglement or remove the cause of entanglement
- Assess the available equipment for its suitability prior to use
- Ensure equipment is used effectively and safely
- Ensure personnel do not become entangled



## Hazard - Animals requiring evacuation

---

### Hazard Knowledge

A wide range of situations may require animals to be evacuated; for example, [advice to the Government by the Farm Animal Welfare Committee \(FAWC\)](#) highlighted the need to co-ordinate and resource an animal rescue response in readiness for disaster or emergency.

It may be necessary to evacuate unaffected animals due to fire, flooding or presence of hazardous materials. However, in the event of flooding, it may be the case that the animals can be safely left in position, if the water surrounding them will recede or subside in a reasonable period.

If animals are in the vicinity of an incident, it may prove beneficial to evacuate the animals to an appropriate place to improve fire and rescue service access to the incident.

Evacuating animals may present hazards to members of the public and emergency responders. The behaviour of animals is likely to be very different from those exhibited in non-emergency situations.

Some animals may not be allowed to be evacuated; for example, laboratory animals may be infected with diseases that are hazardous to people.

All people involved with the evacuation, including fire and rescue service personnel, need to be

clearly briefed and closely supervised until the animals have been relocated to a secure holding area.



## Control measure - Evacuate animals

---

### Control measure knowledge

Techniques employed in evacuating animals from a place of danger to a place of safety may take many forms and be entirely dependent on the nature of the danger, the species involved and the number of animals.

Specialist advice for animal rescue or animal behaviour may be beneficial for successfully evacuating animals.

Prior to commencing the evacuation, it is essential to identify an appropriate route to be used and a secure holding area for the animals to be moved to.

Further guidance can be found in the National Operational Guidance: Industry – [Animal](#) facilities.

### Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Pre-planning with land owners, land managers and other people responsible for animals, to consider options for animal evacuation
- Having mutual aid arrangements in place for the evacuation of animals

### Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Attempt to liaise with the owner of the animals before commencing evacuation
- Be aware of the capabilities and limitations of the organisations in attendance, for carrying



out animal evacuation

- Determine an appropriate route to be used
- Identify a secure holding area
- Brief personnel on the evacuation techniques, route to be taken and the location of the secure holding area



## Hazard - Animal requiring immediate first aid or resuscitation

---

### Hazard Knowledge

A person with responsibility for an animal may commit an offence if an act, or failure to act, causes an animal to suffer unnecessarily. Therefore, in the absence of veterinary assistance, and to prevent the condition of the animal worsening, common first aid techniques used for people can be adapted and used for injuries such as:

- Wounds – punctures, incisions or grazes
- Burns – chemical or heat
- Smoke inhalation

If a companion animal is involved in a hazardous materials incident, see Hazardous materials: [Contaminated members of the public](#) for further information.



## Control measure - Immediate first aid for animal

---

### Control measure knowledge

This could include applying pressure to a wound or cooling burns with water. There are various sources of information about first aid for animals, including the Blue Cross website:

- [Basic first aid for dogs](#)
- [Basic first aid for cats](#)
- [Basic first aid for horses](#)

To protect emergency responders, the animal should be appropriately restrained prior to providing first aid. The animal should be placed into the care of the owner, a suitable person, a veterinary surgeon, or an animal care specialist, at the earliest opportunity.

If fire and rescue services are called to an incident where there is a stranded marine mammal, they should contact the relevant animal welfare charity and request their attendance. While waiting for them to attend, and if appropriate, initial first aid for the animal may be provided as suggested on the [British Divers Marine Life Rescue website](#). The fire and rescue service or the animal welfare charity may decide to request the assistance of local voluntary groups that deal with marine mammal rescue.

## Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Consider including the topic of immediate first aid for animals in training for specialist teams

## Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Consider providing immediate first aid for the animal, in the absence of veterinary assistance
- Consider appropriately restraining the animal prior to providing first aid
- Ensure any personnel providing immediate first aid to the animal are wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Place the animal into the care of an appropriate person or organisation at the earliest opportunity





## Control measure - Resuscitation of animal

---

### Control measure knowledge

It is possible to carry out cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) on animals. There are various sources of information about CPR for animals, including the Blue Cross website:

- [Basic first aid for dogs](#)
- [Basic first aid for cats](#)

Oxygen can be provided via oxygen masks designed for people. However, oxygen masks designed for animals are available in various sizes to cater for small pets through to equines.

To protect emergency responders, the animal should be appropriately restrained prior to providing CPR or oxygen. The animal should be placed into the care of the owner, a suitable person, a veterinary surgeon, or an animal care specialist, at the earliest opportunity.

### Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Consider providing equipment appropriate for resuscitating animals

### Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Assess the available resuscitation equipment for suitability prior to use
- Consider appropriately restraining the animal prior to providing CPR or oxygen
- Ensure any personnel resuscitating the animal are wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Ensure equipment is used effectively and safely





- Place the animal into the care of an appropriate person or organisation at the earliest opportunity