



Media release

The Hon Ryan Smith MP

Minister for Environment and Climate Change
Minister for Youth Affairs

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Research begins on strategic cattle grazing to reduce bushfire risk

The Coalition Government is trialling strategic cattle grazing as a tool to mitigate bushfire risk in Victoria's high country, delivering on its election commitment.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) has commissioned an independent scientific research program, with 400 cattle this week introduced to six sites over 25,600 hectares, or 3.9 per cent of the Alpine National Park, for the remainder of the 2010/2011 grazing season – which runs until 30 April 2011.

"This scientific trial, being undertaken by Professor Mark Adams of the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre, will provide much-needed evidence on the effectiveness of strategic cattle grazing for fuel and fire management purposes," Minister for Environment and Climate Change Ryan Smith said.

"The Coalition Government is committed to making transparent and informed decisions on bushfire management in Victoria's high country based on credible scientific evidence," Mr Smith said.

"Current information on the effect of cattle grazing for bushfire mitigation is limited.

"Bushfire management is a significant issue in Victoria and this trial will ultimately inform future fire management decisions and ensure an effective approach to environmental management.

"It will also help us gain a better understanding of the impact of strategic cattle grazing on reducing bushfire risk and on ecological values."

Mr Smith said research sites were selected to avoid environmental impacts, and only areas that have been grazed in the past would be used. No grazing will occur on Bogong High Plains as part of the trial.

"Professor Adams, from the University of Sydney, is currently leading the High Fire Project for the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre and his depth of experience and knowledge will be a valuable asset during the research," Mr Smith said.

The six-year scientific research program will help DSE to meet its responsibilities under Victoria's National Parks Act to '*ensure that appropriate and sufficient measures are taken to protect each national park and state park from injury by fire*'.

"Any future decisions on the use of strategic cattle grazing to reduce bushfire risk in Victoria's high country will be informed by the outcomes of the research," Mr Smith said.

"Any decision the government makes on strategic grazing in the future will take into account any potential impact on the environment and community."

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