

Be safe, play the goat

BY LYDIA ROBERTS

GOATS are the latest weapon being used on some rural properties in the battle against bushfires.

The ruminants are grazing on fire-prone land in the Far South Coast and Northern Tablelands of NSW to see whether they can help reduce fuel load this spring.

"The Rural Fire Service is always keen to learn more about how we can improve and enhance the ways we can better prepare areas ahead of the fire season," community risk manager Shellie Smyth said.

"So we have recruited goats to undertake hazard reduction grazing trials to evaluate their effectiveness and continue mitigation works to further prepare this fire season."

Some property managers are leasing the goats as part of the trial, letting them graze on their grassland.

"The goats provide an alternative to burning, which is heavily reliant on favourable weather," Shellie said.

"The four-legged firefighting crews will be reducing



FOUR LEGGED FRIENDS: The NSW Rural Fire Service has recruited goats to undertake hazard reduction grazing trials to evaluate their effectiveness and continue mitigation works to further prepare this fire season. **Photo: Supplied**

the fuel loads rain, hail or shine."

Two-legged residents can do their bit to help protect their property this bushfire season.

Many areas across Australia have received a drenching, with above-average rainfall.

While this is welcome after the drought, it has meant

early and rapid growth of shrubs and grasses.

Longer grass spreads fire faster, so rural residents should mow regularly and remove grass cuttings.

Take an audit of your property to list anything that may be flammable or catch alight in a fire, such as old tins that may be storing pesticides.

This includes discarded

bits of timber and firewood leftover from winter.

Having a bushfire survival plan is essential; however, many residents overlook protecting cherished possessions in the event of a bushfire.

Photos, jewellery, old school reports and mementos from departed loved ones have been lost forever as

residents flee from a fire with their family and pets.

If you live in a fire-prone area, the only sure way to keep treasures and mementos safe is to store them off-site or, in the case of jewellery, wear it at all times.

If this is impractical (especially for smaller treasures), you may want to invest in a fire-safe file box.