

The Greek experience in animal assistance during fires (livestock, pet animals and wildlife)

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Mega-fire of Thrace area including Dadia-Lefkimi-Soufli Forest National Park



Lasted for 17 days (19 August- 4 September 2023) and was Europe's largest fire at least since 2020



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The fire as a whole did not have a normal flow. Multiple arsons started fire at unrelated points and moving close to the wind.

Photos by Zouras laying hens' farm



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Legislation and regulatory authority

- *Were the Veterinary Services (VSs) progressively integrated in the national Risk Reduction Plan (Civil Protection mechanism)?*
- *YES following official communication between Central Services for the management of dead animals*

YES following official communication during the fire incident of Thrace area in August 2023 as regards animal welfare

However, the General Fire Department (fire brigade) and the Hellenic Police were in full charge of all actions, including the management of Veterinary Services.



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The evacuation of farms was not an easy task. Official Veterinarians had to cooperate with fire brigade services that, in their turn, fought with a sudden event that started from an area with no farms and the fire changed direction continuously in an unpredicted way. Also updated messages informed that the area for transportation would soon be burned too.



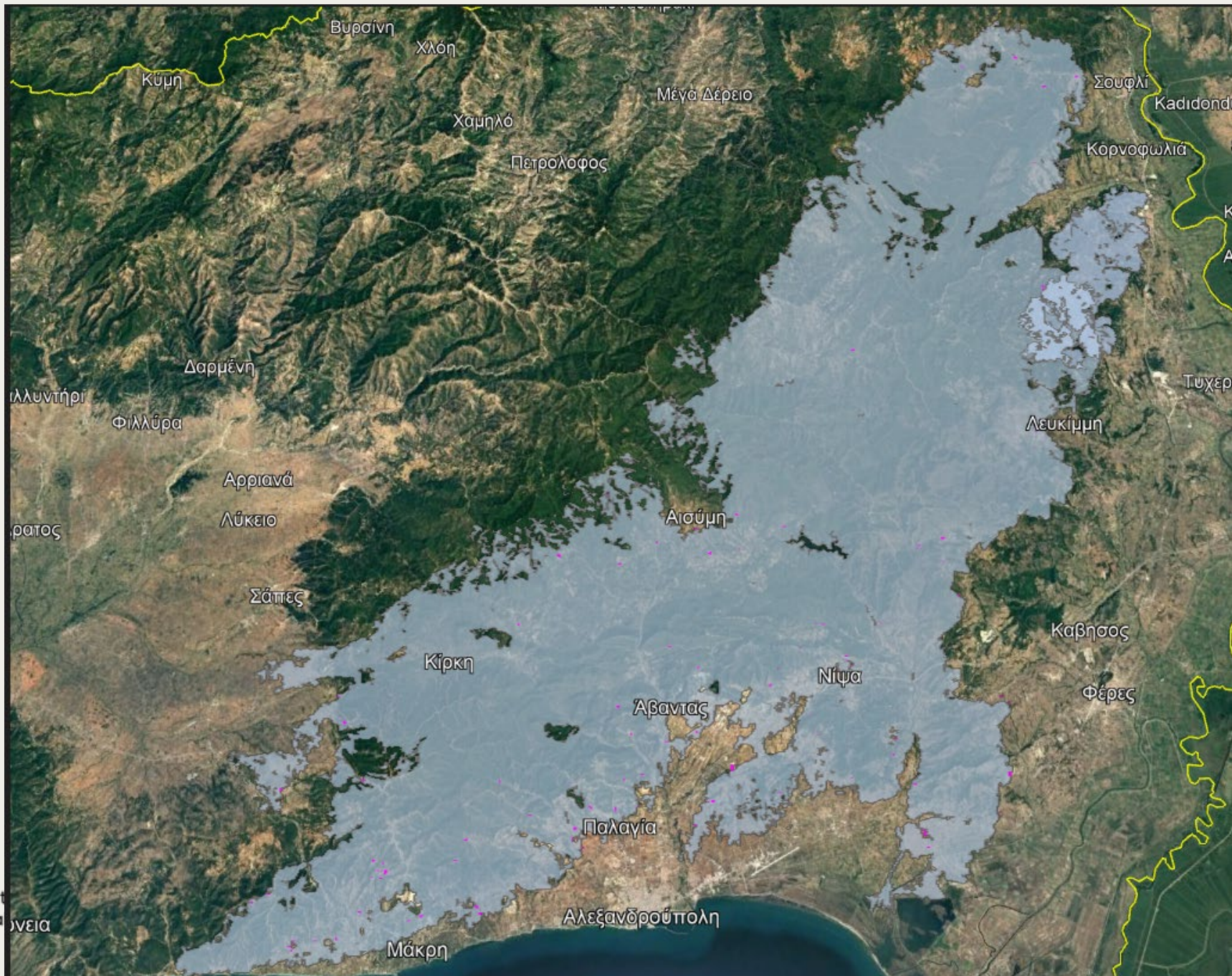
<https://www.awn.com/news/cartoon-network-re-ups-five-hit-original-series>



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Regional emergency Centre in Evros Veterinary Services – Collaboration with farmers and transporters

- The Department of Veterinary Services of the Regional Unit of Evros was activated immediately from the onset of the phenomenon using a state vehicle in order to try and reach sheep and goat farms.
- The Veterinary Services' mandate to livestock farmers was to move animals to defined open settlements, since the primary concern of the fire brigade services was to protect the villages (and not necessarily the farms) from burning. They also ordered the doors of farm buildings to remain open so that the animals could have the possibility to escape.
- Animals were kept in football stadiums because there was a safe zone around; in general large spaces without dried grass or tree or branches – fire safety zones- and quarryings were selected. Forced evacuations of settlements were also made in many livestock farms that were threatened by the fire.



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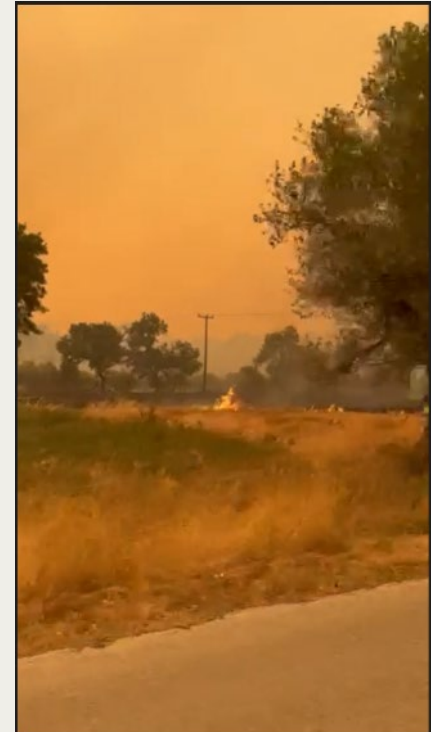
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TRANSPORT OF LIVE ANIMALS

Many farmers had to transport their own animals on foot without vehicles.
There were settlements where animals were tried to be transported with authorised livestock vehicles.
But there were not enough vehicles available and not enough time to load them properly, because the fire was running at high speed and there was no escape exit nor was the fire brigade able to approach.

Photos by Zouras laying hens' farm personnel



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Budgeting and resourcing

Compensations funds were immediately announced by the government but have not been reimbursed yet.

Photo Evangelia Plevraki



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Wild animals

Wild animals (jackal, turtles, etc.) were managed by the ecological organizations and also private veterinarians with whom a public contract agent cooperated and they mainly managed strays and wild fauna (treatment of burns, etc.).

Photos: www.newsbreak.gr



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Integration and coordination with other agencies, organizations and stakeholders

- *Other national authorities and agencies, incl. environmental agency and Meteorological institutions*
- *Other data/analysis providers*
- *Official and private veterinarians, veterinary technicians, veterinary practice managers*
- *Animal welfare NGOs, animal shelters, animal rescue units*
- *Farmers organisations and breeders organizations*
- *Fire brigades*
- *Police*
- *Army*
- *Citizens*



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Lessons learnt

Review and update of legal framework – Improvement of collaboration at a Central level with the Ministry of Civil Protection

Resources : The State should cover expenses for feed and water – 35000 Euros were offered in this case by citizens
- Training



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YOU MIGHT HAVE SOME TIME BUT YOU MIGHT NOT HAVE ACCESS!!!! YOU MIGHT BE TRAPPED!!!! AND HAVE NOT ENOUGH TIME TO LOAD TO VEHICLES



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Lessons learnt - Instructions

- *Activation of contingency plan*
- *Activation and deactivation of the national EOC*
- *Activation and deactivation of the local EOC*
- *Activation of funding mechanism*
- *Activation of contracts (personnel, services)*
- *Distributions of donations*
- *Indemnity claims*
- *Evacuation of animals – always a risk , in some cases if the animals stay in the farm they might not be burned*
- *Relocation of animals –Many municipalities do not have spare farms*
- *Animal identification and record keeping*
- *Search and rescue of animals*
- *Veterinary TRIAGE (treatment/euthanasia/humane slaughter)*
- *Carcass disposal*
- *Management of abandoned animals*
- *Feed and water distribution*



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Thank you

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