

# Disaster Preparedness for Horses

## Horses require extra consideration in disaster planning

A good disaster plan is vital to keeping yourself and your animal companions safe. But horses require extra consideration because of their size and specific transportation needs. Since you won't have much time to think or act during an emergency, take time now to create an effective emergency plan.



## Planning for a disaster

Permanently identify each horse by tattoo, microchip, brand, or photograph. In your records, include the horse's age, sex, breed, and color. Keep this information with your important papers.

Keep halters ready for your horses. On each halter attach a luggage tag with the following information: the horse's name, your name, email address, your telephone number, and another emergency telephone number where someone can be reached. At the time of evacuation, consider additional temporary identification such as a leg band.

Place your horses' Coggins tests, veterinary papers, identification photographs, and vital information—such as medical history, allergies, and emergency telephone numbers (veterinarian, family members, etc.)—in a watertight envelope. Store the envelope with your other important papers in a safe place that will be easy for you to access, so you can take them with you when you and your horses evacuate.

Make arrangements in advance to have your horse trailer in case of an emergency. If you don't have your own trailer or don't have enough room in your trailer for horses, be sure you have several people on standby to help evacuate your horses.

## Evacuation

It is important that your horses are comfortable being loaded onto a trailer. If your horses are unaccustomed to being loaded onto a trailer, practice the procedure so they become used to it.

Know where you can take your horses in an emergency evacuation. When possible, make arrangements with a friend or another horse owner to stable your horses well beyond the region at risk. Contact your local animal care and control agency, agricultural extension agent, or local emergency management authorities for information about shelters in your area.

## If you cannot evacuate with your horse

Have a back-up plan in case it's impossible to take your horse with you when you evacuate. Consider different types of disasters and whether your horses would be better off in a barn or loose in a field. Your local humane organization, agricultural extension agent, or local emergency management agency may be able to provide you with information about your community's disaster response plans.

Share your evacuation plans with friends and neighbors. Post detailed instructions in several places—including the barn office or tack room, the horse trailer, and barn entrances—to ensure emergency workers can see them in case you are not able to evacuate your horses yourself.

## When disaster strikes

Don't leave your horse behind. A situation that isn't safe for you won't be safe for your equine companion, either.

Evacuate immediately. If you wait until the last minute to evacuate, emergency management officials may tell you that you must leave your horses behind. In this case, your horses could be unattended for days without care, food, or water.

## Supplies

Prepare a basic first aid kit that is portable and easily accessible.

Be sure to include enough water (12 to 20 gallons per day per horse), hay, feed, and medications for several days for each horse.

# Disaster Preparedness for Farm Animals

## Large animals and livestock need extra consideration in disaster planning

### Why Livestock Owners Need to Be Prepared

Disaster preparedness is important for all animals, but it is especially important for livestock because of the size of the animals and their shelter and transportation needs. Disasters can happen anywhere and take many different forms—from hurricanes to barn fires, floods to hazardous materials spills—forcing possible evacuation. Whether you evacuate or shelter in place, it's important to be prepared to protect your livestock.



### Take Precautions

One of the smartest things you can do to protect your family and livestock is to make sure you regularly review and update your disaster plan, supplies, and information regularly.

## Taking Precautions for Protecting Livestock

### Be prepared in the event of an emergency

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### Take Precautions

The following is a list of suggestions we recommend to help keep your livestock safe during an emergency.

- Make a disaster plan to protect your property, your facilities, and your animals. Create a list of emergency telephone numbers, including those of your employees, neighbors, veterinarian, state veterinarian, poison control, local animal shelter, animal care and control, county extension service, local agricultural schools, trailering resources, and local volunteers.
- Include a contact person outside the disaster area. Make sure all this information is written down and that everyone has a copy.
- Make sure every animal has durable and visible identification.
- Ensure that poultry have access to high areas in which to perch, if they are in a flood-prone area, as well as to food and clean water.

### Make a disaster plan to protect your property, your facilities, and your animals.

- Reinforce your house, barn, and outbuildings with hurricane straps and other measures. Perform regular safety checks on all utilities, buildings, and facilities on your farm.
- Use only native and deep-rooted plants and trees in landscaping (non-native plants are less durable and hardy in your climate and may become dislodged by high winds or broken by ice and snow).
- Remove all barbed wire, and consider rerouting permanent fencing so that animals may move to high ground in a flood and to low-lying areas during high winds.
- Install a hand pump and obtain enough large containers to water your animals for at least a week (municipal water supplies and wells are often contaminated during a disaster).
- Identify alternate water and power sources. A generator with a safely stored supply of fuel may be essential, especially if you have electrical equipment necessary to the well being of your animals.
- Secure or remove anything that could become blowing debris; make a habit of securing trailers, propane tanks, and other large objects. If you have boats, feed troughs, or other large containers, fill them with water before any high wind event. This prevents them from blowing around and also gives you an additional supply of water.
- If you use heat lamps or other electrical machinery, make sure the wiring is safe and that any heat source is clear of flammable debris.
- Label hazardous materials and place them all in the same safe area. Provide local fire and rescue and emergency management authorities with information about the location of any hazardous materials on your property.
- Remove old buried trash—a potential source of hazardous materials during flooding that may leech into crops, feed supplies, water sources, and pasture.
- Review and update your disaster plan, supplies, and information regularly.

## Sheltering in Place

If evacuation is not possible, a decision must be made whether to confine large animals to an available shelter on your farm or leave them out in pastures. Many factors need to be taken into consideration to figure out what's best in varying situations.

# Sheltering Your Livestock in Place

## Evacuation not always an option

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## Sheltering in Place

If evacuation is not possible, a decision must be made whether to confine large animals to an available shelter on your farm or leave them out in pastures. Owners may believe that their animals are safer inside barns, but in many circumstances, confinement takes away the animals' ability to protect themselves. This decision should be based on the type of disaster and the soundness and location of the sheltering building.

Survey your property for the best location for animal sheltering. If your pasture area meets the following criteria, your large animals may be better off out in the pasture than being evacuated:

- No exotic (non-native) trees, which uproot easily
- No overhead power lines or poles
- No debris or sources of blowing debris
- No barbed wire fencing (woven wire fencing is best)
- Not less than one acre in size (if less than an acre, your livestock may not be able to avoid blowing debris).

If your pasture area does not meet these criteria, you should evacuate. Whether you evacuate or shelter in place, make sure that you have adequate and safe fencing or pens to separate and group animals appropriately.

Work with your state department of agriculture and county extension service. If your animals cannot be evacuated, these agencies may be able to provide on-farm oversight. Contact them well in advance to learn their capabilities and the most effective communication procedure.



## Barn Fires: The Most Common Disaster

Preventing barn fires and being prepared in the event of a fire can mean the difference between life and death for your livestock. Knowledge of the danger of fires and how to deal with them is essential, and vigilance is key to prevention.

# Disaster Preparedness: Barn Fires

## Keep your horses safe from the leading equine disaster



Barn fires are one of any horse owner's biggest nightmares. In just a few minutes of heat, smoke, and fury, thousands of dollars of saddles, bridles, hay, grain, and equipment can be lost along with the barn. That your horse could be trapped inside is almost too painful to imagine.

Preventing barn fires and being well prepared to deal with a fire can mean the difference between life and death for your horses.

If you have a barn, it's essential that you understand how fires start and how to deal with them.

But the single most important thing is to be vigilant at all times.

## How to prevent barn fires

Prohibit smoking in or around the barn. A discarded cigarette can ignite dry bedding or hay in seconds.

Avoid parking tractors and vehicles in or near the barn. Engine heat and backfires can spark a flame.

Store other machinery and flammable materials outside the barn.

Inspect electrical systems regularly and immediately correct any problems. Rodents can chew on electrical wiring and cause damage that quickly becomes a fire hazard.

Keep appliances to a minimum in the barn. Use stall fans, space heaters, and radios only when someone is in the barn.

Be sure hay is dry before storing it. Hay that is too moist may spontaneously combust. Store hay outside the barn in a dry, covered area when possible.

**Most barn fires are preventable, and too often they result from negligence or apathy toward fire prevention.**

## How to prepare for a barn fire

- Keep aisles, stall doors, and barn doors free of debris and equipment.
- Mount fire extinguishers around the stable, especially at all entrances.
- Have a planned evacuation route for every stall in the barn.
- Familiarize employees with your evacuation plans.
- Post emergency telephone numbers at each telephone and at each entrance. Emergency telephone numbers should include those of the barn manager, veterinarian, emergency response, and, if you have horses, qualified handlers.
- Also keep your barn's street address clearly posted to relay to the 911 operator or your community's emergency services.
- Be sure your address and the entrance to your property are clearly visible from the main road.
- Consider installing smoke alarms and heat detectors throughout the barn. New heat sensors can detect rapidly changing temperatures in your barn. The heat sensors should be hooked up to sirens that will quickly alert you and your neighbors to a possible barn fire.
- Host an open house for emergency services personnel in your area to familiarize them with the layout of your property. If you have horses, provide them with tips on horse handling or present a mini-seminar with hands-on training for horse handling.
- Familiarize your animals with emergency procedures and common activities they would encounter during a disaster. Try to desensitize them to flashlights and flashing lights.

## How to respond safely to a barn fire

- Immediately call 911 or your local emergency services.
- Do not enter the barn if it is already engulfed in flames.
- If it is safe for you to enter the barn, evacuate animals one at a time, starting with the most accessible ones.
- Never let animals loose in an area where they are able to return to the barn.
- Put a halter and lead rope on each horse when you open the stall door. Be aware that horses tend to run back into burning barns out of fear and confusion.
- Blindfold horses only if absolutely necessary. Many horses will balk at a blindfold, making evacuation more difficult and time consuming.
- Move them to paddocks close enough to reach quickly but far enough from the barn that they won't be affected by the fire and smoke.
- Be sure to have all your horses checked by a veterinarian after the fire. Smoke inhalation can cause serious lung damage and respiratory complications. Horses are prone to stress and may experience colic after a fire.

## Evacuation Planning

A successful evacuation plan depends on many factors. We've compiled a detailed list of precautions and do's and don'ts to help you develop a foolproof strategy.

## Farm Disaster Kit

Make a disaster kit so you have supplies on hand in the event of a disaster. Place the kit in a central location and let everyone know where it is. Check the contents regularly to ensure fresh and complete supplies. Here are suggested items to include then add items that you use every day.

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