



Preparing Livestock for Hurricane Season

Hurricane season begins June 1st every year. When you are thinking about and preparing for hurricane season, are the livestock and agriculture equipment you own a part of the plan?

When preparing livestock for the upcoming hurricane season you should check their records to ensure that they are current on all vaccinations. Health records are extremely important to have up to date and accessible in case of an emergency such as a hurricane. In addition to health records, livestock should also have a permanent form of identification which is also recorded in a safe location to prove they are your animals. Livestock owners should have plenty of feed, hay and water on hand prior to the storm making landfall in case the animals cannot graze or need to be confined for a period of time. It is important to have such supplies in advance because many of these resources may not be available following the storm. Basic veterinary supplies such as bandages, topical ointments, etc should be on hand along with restraint equipment such as a halter and rope for veterinary services, if required. For possible fence mending and repair, make sure to have extra fencing equipment and supplies available. Temporary panels make a great impromptu holding pen in many cases and are great to have on hand.

Just before the storm makes landfall, turn off the power and water in the barn area. Not to the fences. This will keep animals in or around the barn from being electrocuted. Owners should also plan to prepare their barn, pastures and other out-buildings for the hurricane season. Any weak boards, wire, posts, or other loose debris should be securely fastened or stored to reduce chance of injury to livestock from flying objects.

In case of evacuation, livestock trailers should be properly maintained and in working order. The best way to ensure that your livestock remains safe is to evacuate them well in advance of the storm making landfall if at all possible. When evacuating livestock, make sure they have plenty of feed, hay and water for the duration of their evacuation. If evacuation of livestock is not feasible, owners should turn the livestock loose into larger pastures or pen with solid shelter or large trees on higher ground. This is preferred to keeping livestock in a barn or small pen where they cannot avoid flying or falling debris. Livestock will instinctively go to a protected area of the pasture to remain out of harm's way. Smaller livestock should be brought indoors for protection. Check to see that feed and hay on hand is securely stored in a dry and water proof space. Do not check on livestock during the storm as they can take care of themselves. Wait until after the storm to check on your livestock. This is for your own safety as well as theirs.

The younger animals in your herd are more susceptible to stress than the older animals. Provide them with a clean, dry area to stand if available, to help with the stress that the animals endure. Administering electrolytes or vitamins may assist the animals in overcoming their stress and help their bodies return to normal.

You should be prepared to administer basic veterinary care, from the supplies you have accumulated, when checking on livestock following the storm. However, if you encounter more than minor cuts or abrasions, you should contact your veterinarian for assistance. You should also be prepared for animals that may be born during the storm. Bad weather may cause pregnant females to give birth if they are near term.

Just as you would prepare your family and home for the hurricane season you should prepare your livestock, barns and out-buildings.

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Hurricane Preparedness & Recovery

Farmers and Ranchers

Agricultural producers face unique challenges when preparing for and recovering from disasters. With that in mind, we have summarized relevant information from our [Disaster Handbook](#) for you. We offer guidelines and safety tips for restoring damaged businesses to profitable enterprises.

- [Protecting Farm Buildings from Storm Winds](#)
- [Power Failure on the Farm](#)
- [Protecting Livestock during a Hurricane](#)
- [Farm Cleanup](#)

Protecting Farm Buildings

- Securely close all doors and windows. Try to determine whether the buffeting and force of the wind will break fasteners or hinges.
- Nail doors and windows shut, if necessary.
- Nail plywood or boards over large windows and windows with weak sashes.
- Brace large barn doors and weak walls. As the hurricane passes, the wind direction will change, therefore, use both interior and exterior braces. Place braces on the reinforced section of the door or wall to distribute the bracing effect over a larger area.
- Check that roof rafters are securely fastened to the wall studding.
- Use hurricane-rated straps or 2" x 6" knee braces to secure rafters, if necessary.
- Check metal roofing and siding for loose nails. If nails don't tighten when hammered back in, pull them out, use a #12 or #14 metal screw to fill the hole, and re-nail 2 to 4 inches away; eaves should be nailed every 5 inches.
- Do not use heavy machinery to anchor small buildings. Replacing machinery could be more expensive than replacing a building.

Power Failure on the Farm

Poultry and Livestock

- Ventilate shelter.
- Because oxygen will eventually be used up in mechanically ventilated production facilities, clear debris from all vents. Then open vents to facilitate natural air flow.
- Poultry facilities should be equipped with knock-out panels for emergency ventilation.
- In dairy facilities, open doors or turn cows outside.
- Provide all animals, especially cattle, with plenty of clean water.
- Your water pump may possibly be driven with a small gasoline engine and a belt. Otherwise you will need to haul water.

Equipment

- Unplug or turn off all electric equipment to prevent damage when power is restored.

Milk & Cream

- You can use the intake manifold on the tractor engine as a vacuum to operate milkers that do not have a magnetic pulsator.

- Request that the dairy pick up milk as soon as possible.
- Consider adding a standby power generator to handle vital electrical equipment on the dairy.
- Even if you are short of extra milk storage facilities, do not store milk in stock tanks or other containers such as bathtubs. Dairy plants may not accept milk that has been stored in anything other than regular milk storage containers.
- Check with your local dairy about the policy regarding emergency storage of milk and cream.
- Check your tank for souring each time you add milk to it if you are unable to cool your milk or have it picked up. This check could mean the difference between losing all or only part of your milk supply.

Protecting Livestock

- When flood conditions occur, un-confined livestock can usually take care of themselves. Do not, however, let them become trapped in low-lying pens.
- In broad, level flood plains where flood waters are seldom deeper than 3 or 4 feet, construct mounds of soil on which livestock can stay until flood waters recede. Construct mounds from bales of hay for hogs to climb on. Try to build these mounds where they will not be washed away by fast-flowing water.
- Provide feed and water for the livestock. Water is essential. Thirsty animals will try to break out to get to flood waters. If water is in short supply, limit the livestock's feed intake.
- If animals are housed with machinery, fasten bales of straw in front of sharp edges and protruding parts such as cutter bars or crank handles. Do not use hay because animals will eat it.
- Try to cover wooden paddle wheels on combines or choppers since these parts can be dangerous if partially broken.
- Block off narrow passageways where animals would be unable to turn around. A few heavy animals in a narrow dead end can be dangerous not only to themselves but also to the buildings in which they are housed.
- Make provisions to block livestock from any access to herbicides, pesticides and treated seeds. Store such chemicals and seeds where flood waters will not contaminate livestock feed or water.
- Turn off electricity at the main switch. Livestock could damage electric fixtures, causing fires or electrocutions.
- If dairy barns may become flooded, drive cattle out of the barn. During the rapid rise of water, cattle often refuse to leave a barn and may drown if the water rises high enough in the barn.

Farm Cleanup

- Delay permanent repairs until buildings are thoroughly dry.
- Spread wet feeds to dry. Avoid feeding wet feeds to livestock unless absolutely necessary.
- To avoid a fire hazard, move wet hay outside and spread it out to dry.
- Move livestock to unflooded pastures to prevent disease.
- Promptly dispose of animal carcasses.
- Disassemble, clean, dry and lubricate farm machinery. Do not start motors or engines until they are cleaned and reconditioned.
- Clear and open drains, ditches, channels, small streams and tile drain outlets. Drain floodwater, if possible, from fields.
- Plug breaks in dikes. Use temporary structures to stop breaks and prevent further high water.
- Clear debris, especially barbed wire and other materials which could be dangerous to livestock, from lots and fields.
- Avoid overexertion and strain in lifting and moving heavy objects or loads.
- When using kerosene, keep away from heat, sparks and open flame.

Adapted and excerpted from:

The Disaster Handbook, UF/IFAS Extension (rev. 11/03).