

# Hurricane Preparedness for Livestock

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Livestock owners should “hurricane-ize” their livestock each year prior to hurricane season. This would include making sure their livestock are current on their vaccinations (blackleg, leptospirosis, tetanus, encephalitis). Additional feed, hay and water supplies should be purchased several days prior to landfall and stored in case these are not available following the hurricane. Owners should stock up on basic veterinary supplies (bandages, topical antibiotics, tetanus toxoid) and have restraint equipment (ropes, halters) ready to restrain injured animals for veterinary assistance. Immediately prior to landfall turn off all electrical power and water in the barn (not fences).

Livestock owners can also hurricane-ize their barns, pens and pastures by removing from the premises any loose boards, wire, fence posts, etc. to reduce the chance of injury to livestock by flying objects. Pens and barns should be looked over closely and loose boards or sheets of tin should be replaced or nailed down. Barns can be strapped down to ground ties as trailers are to reduce (but not eliminate) wind damage. Equipment should have a place under cover whenever possible to protect it.

If at all possible, livestock should never remain in a closed barn. Damage or destruction of the barn by wind or tornados would injure or kill them. Whenever possible livestock should be evacuated out of the threatened area (again do this well in advance, with feed, hay, water, and additional veterinary supplies). Make sure your trailer is safe to haul in, good floor with mats, safe tires with a spare, and working lights. Don't plan on coming back until the all clear is given.

If large livestock (cattle and horses) cannot be evacuated, turn them loose in larger pastures or pens with some

solid shelter or tall brush and large trees on high ground. This is not the recommended approach for maximum safety, but it is preferable to remaining in small pens or barns. Cattle and horses will instinctively go deep in this type of cover. Smaller livestock (sheep, goats, swine, or rabbits) can be brought indoors for protection if necessary, especially in the garage. Use wooden pallets can be used to create a pen. Also check to see that feed and hay is well covered or protected from wind and water. Put covers on round bales or hay and stack on posts, tires, or high ground to prevent water damage.

Do not put yourself at risk checking livestock that remain outside but be prepared to check on them immediately following the storm. Most animals are used to being outside in bad weather and will be simply stressed and need clean feed, a dry place to stand, and water. Some electrolytes or vitamins will be beneficial in returning them to normal. However, expect the worse, animals may be injured, some severely, so be prepared to render first aid on arrival. For minor cuts and abrasions most owners are capable of assistance. For more traumatic injuries, call your veterinarian for assistance. Younger animals are more susceptible to stress than older animals and may need more care. Also, bad weather often causes pregnant females near term to give birth so watch for little ones. Assist in birthing when necessary.

Most damage to buildings, pens, and animals comes from wind and flying objects so the ability to protect them in advance from these dangers greatly reduces the chance of injury to livestock.

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