

EMERGENCY and DISASTER PREPAREDNESS for HORSE OWNERS

Most people have thought about an emergency plan for their families in the event of a crisis or natural disaster. But what about a plan for your horses? Do you have a safe place for them or a plan in the event of a disaster? The type of disaster may vary from a widespread fire, flood, to a tornado or a hurricane. Other threats to consider include foreign disease outbreaks, terrorism, or a nuclear accident. This is a brief overview of things that will need to be addressed in preparation for an emergency or natural disaster.

There are several questions that should be addressed prior to an event. What would you do if you were without power for 3 days, had to evacuate all the horses on the premises, or had a loss of structures due to wind damage? Do you have the resources to evacuate all animals quickly? Can you provide feed and water for all animals for 3 days with no power or outside help? Do you have a method of positively identifying your horses/animals in the event of a disaster or evacuation? Do you have a way of contacting your veterinarian if animals are injured during a disaster? Horse owners can avoid a lot of distress by taking time in advance and preparing a plan and getting supplies together.

Prior to an emergency or natural disaster take a careful look at your property and identify the best place for your horses/animals in each type of disaster possible for your area. Prepare for the possibility you might have to evacuate – contact your local veterinarian, law enforcement, or animal control for routes and recommendations for evacuation. Make sure the tires and lights on your trailer and truck are maintained. Also, make sure to have adequate fuel to evacuate. Find temporary housing facilities for your animals and check entry requirements for each. Be sure to have agreements arranged for your animals in advance. Make sure you have all necessary paperwork for your animals in order - including identifying information (pictures, registrations, microchip numbers), as well as current vaccination and medical records including a current Coggins test. Take your records with you because if left behind they may get destroyed. Write down any special feeding instructions as well as medications with dosages for your animals. It is also important to have the name and phone number of your veterinarian. If you have insurance coverage, make sure to keep it current and have adequate coverage. Devise a plan and familiarize your family and farm personnel with it – discuss it ahead of time.

A few other things to think about and prepare for in the event of an emergency include an emergency kit and a buddy system. An example of items for your emergency kit include; water buckets, portable radio and flashlights, fire-resistant leads and halters, knife, scissors, wirecutters, duct tape, leg wraps, livestock markers or paint, a disinfectant such as bleach, and first aid items such as antibiotic ointment, Betadine or Nolvasan solution, gauze sponges and bandage material, eye ointment, tranquilizer injections (optional – acquired through your veterinarian). Make arrangements with a friend or neighbor to check on each other during a disaster. Inform one another of the prearranged evacuation and emergency plan. You and your buddy may even pool resources such as generators, water tanks, and trailers.

In summary, think about what disasters or emergency situations may affect you. Then sit down and discuss a plan in the event of each and gather the supplies you will need in each situation. The bottom line is BE PREPARED.