

# Hurricane Preparedness for Livestock



# 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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COLLEGE STATION – Livestock owners are urged to prepare and follow procedures as Hurricane Rita continues its projected path toward the Texas Gulf Coast.

"With the right preparation, you can protect livestock from injury should a hurricane occur," said Dr. Joe Paschal, Texas Cooperative Extension beef cattle specialist in Corpus Christi.

Stockpile feed, hay and water in case these items are not available after a hurricane, Paschal said. Have enough feed on hand for at least a week, and the same amount of water – up to 150 gallons per horse or bovine. Feed should be dry and free from mold or moisture.

"Also stock up on basic veterinary supplies," he said. "These include bandages (and) topical antibiotics, and have restraint equipment (ropes and halters) ready for restraining injured animals that need veterinary assistance."

Barns or pens with loose boards or sheets of tin need to be replaced or nailed down. Remove wire, fence posts and other loose items from barns, pens and pastures to reduce the chance of injury to livestock.

"Most damage to buildings and animals come from wind and flying objects," said Dr. Jason Cleere, Extension beef cattle specialist in College Station.

Equipment should be placed under cover if possible. Immediately before the hurricane's landfall, turn off electrical power and water in the barn.

"It's best to evacuate livestock well in advance of a storm," Paschal said. "Make sure your trailer is safe for hauling and equipped with good floor mats, safe tires, a spare tire and working lights. Take along extra feed, hay, water and veterinary supplies."

"Don't plan to return until the storm has passed and it is safe to do so."

If large livestock can't be evacuated, turn them loose in larger pastures or pens on high ground with some solid shelter or tall brush and large trees for cover. Animals will instinctively seek shelter during severe weather.

Take pictures of animals without ear tags, and post them on Web sites or at feed stores to help with owner recovery efforts after the storm. This will also assist the Texas Emergency Response Team, working in partnership with the Texas Animal Health Commission ( <http://www.tahc.state.tx.us/> ), in recovery efforts, Paschal said.

The commission has a list of facilities across the state that are accepting livestock and pets from hurricane evacuees. Producers and pet owners are urged to call (800) 550-8242 to locate a facility.

Animals with minor injuries (small cuts or abrasions) might be easily restrained and treated, but those with more severe cuts or broken bones need professional veterinary assistance as soon as possible.

"Livestock should never remain in a closed barn," Cleere said. "If the barn is damaged by wind, the animals could be injured or killed. Turning livestock loose is not as safe as evacuating them, but it is preferable to leaving them in small pens or barns."

The greatest danger livestock face from hurricanes is flooding that can occur as the storm makes landfall. Make preparations to move cattle from low lying areas prior to landfall.

Smaller animals, sheep, goats, swine and rabbits, can be brought indoors if necessary. Use wooden pallets to build temporary pens in a garage, Paschal said.

"Make sure feed and hay are well protected from wind and water," he said. "Move hay bales to high ground or stack them on posts or tires. Cover bales to prevent water damage."

Livestock owners should not put themselves at risk by checking on livestock during a storm, Paschal said, but do check on them immediately after the storm.

"Most animals are used to being outside in bad weather and will simply need clean feed, a dry place to stand, and water to help them recover from stress.

"Electrolytes and vitamins may also help them return to normal. However, you should be prepared for the worst. If animals are injured, be ready to render first aid."

Most owners can deal with minor injuries such as cuts, Paschal said. If animals are more severely injured, call your veterinarian. Young 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, Paschal noted.

"Watch for the little ones."

For more information, contact a local Extension agent. A list of offices can be found at <http://county-tx.tamu.edu/> .