



# Disaster Preparedness Guidelines for Horse Owners

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How often have you heard "failing to plan is planning to fail"? As a horse owner, that saying couldn't be more true than when it comes to disaster preparedness. When a flood, tornado, earthquake, fire or man-made emergency (like a chemical spill) strikes, the steps you've taken ahead of time to protect the safety and well-being of your animals can mean the difference between life and death.

## **Before**

- Familiarize yourself with the types of disasters that could occur in your area. Develop a written plan of action for each. Include a list of resources (suppliers, trucks and trailers), evacuation sites, emergency phone numbers and people who can help during an emergency. Keep the plan with important papers. Review the Disaster Plan regularly with everyone involved. Post emergency numbers in a visible location in the stable or barn.
- Survey your property for the best location for animal confinement for each type of disaster. Identify food and water sources that do not rely on electricity, which could be lost during an emergency.
- Decide where to take animals if evacuation is necessary. Contact fairgrounds, race tracks, equestrian centers, private farms/stables and humane societies about their policies and ability to take horses in emergencies. Have several sites in mind, in case your first choice is unavailable.
- Familiarize yourself with several evacuation routes to your destination. Avoid routes likely to be heavily travelled by people.
- Permanently identify horses by tattoo or microchip; or temporarily with fetlock or neck identification bands or a halter with identification attached; or painted/etched hooves. Photograph the left and right sides of each horse, as well as its face and medial and lateral lower legs. Record its breed, sex, age and color. Keep copies with important papers.
- Keep vaccinations and boosters up-to-date, including a current Coggins Test. Record the dates, dosages and types of medications/health products the animals have received. Record dosing instructions and dietary requirements. Keep this information with the Disaster Plan.
- Clearly identify for volunteers which animals should be evacuated first, in the event that not all animals can be moved. Make sure all personnel are aware of your wishes.
- Compile an Emergency Disaster Kit. Make sure it is always ready.

## Emergency Disaster Kit

Water bucket  
Leg wraps  
Leads, halters, shanks  
Plastic trash barrel with lid  
Shovel

Portable radio  
Extra batteries  
Lime, bleach  
First aid items  
Flashlights

Sharp knife  
Tarpaulins  
Wire cutters  
Fly spray

## During

- Listen to the Emergency Broadcast System radio/tv station.
- If possible, evacuate your horses early to ensure their safety and ease your stress. Also take dogs, cats and other pets.
- If you evacuate your horses, take all vaccination and medical records, the Emergency Disaster Kit. Call ahead to your destination to make sure the site is still available, as well as availability of water and hay at the site.
- If you must evacuate, but you cannot take your animals, leave them in the preselected area appropriate for disaster type. The animals should have enough freely available food for 48 hours to 72 hours. Do not rely on automatic watering systems; power may be lost. Take all vaccination/medical records and identification photos with you when you depart.

## After

- Use caution when leaving horses outside after a disaster. Familiar scents and landmarks may be altered; animals could become confused and lost. Place them in a secured area.
- Check fences; be sure they are intact. Check pastures and fences for sharp objects that could injure a horse.
- Beware of downed power lines. Beware of raccoons, skunks and other wild animals that may have entered the area and could pose a danger to your horse.
- If a horse is lost, contact veterinarians, humane societies, stables, surrounding farms and other facilities. Listen to the Emergency Broadcast System for groups that may be accepting lost animals.
- If you find a horse, isolate it from your animals until it can be returned or a veterinarian has examined it.
- When approaching unknown or frightened horses, be very cautious. **Always work in pairs.**
- Check with your veterinarian and State Board of Animal Health for information about possible disease outbreaks.



For more information about Disaster Preparedness, contact:  
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