



ARE YOU PREPARED FOR THE NEXT DISASTER IN YOUR AREA?

by Joanna Davis, D.V.M.

Do you know how you would evacuate your flock or herd in the event of a flood? A wildfire or mudslide? How would you round up all of your animals, transport them safely and care for them once they have been evacuated? Or would you have to leave them behind and hope they survive? Have you ever been in the path of a tornado or a fast moving wildfire, but did not know how to safely evacuate your family or your livestock? Do you know whom to contact to help prepare for or recover from a disaster? Would your family, farm or business survive if a disaster were to strike? Livestock producers put a great deal of time and effort into raising their animals. Just as producers plan and prepare for the herd or flock's reproduction, nutrition, disease and parasite control, so too should they invest in protecting their animals from the impacts of disasters. In an instant, one's economic investment, animal genetics and way of life may be obliterated, but producers can take steps now to minimize the impact of a catastrophe.

WHY WORRY?

Developing an emergency response plan *before* a disaster strikes has many benefits. It can:

1. Reduce loss of life, property, businesses
2. Prioritize needs
3. Enhance response and recovery efforts
4. Improve communication before/during/after event
5. Foster the development of partnerships
6. Save taxpayer dollars. Disasters cost LOTS of money! For example, from 2000-2006, estimated costs for declared disasters...\$2 Billion **per week!**

Based where you live, for what disasters are you at most risk?

- Flooding
- Tornadoes
- Snow/Ice Storms
- Hurricanes
- Fires-barn, home, wildfires
- Earthquakes/aftershocks
- Tsunami
- Chemical spills/train derailment
- Explosions
- Contaminated water supply

- Mass casualty event
- Nuclear accidents/attacks
- Radiologic accidents/attacks
- Electromagnetic pulses (EMPs)
- Prolonged power outages
- IT/electronics failures
- Terror attacks
- Bio/agroterror
- Pandemic disease outbreaks/foreign animal disease

While no one can completely eliminate all risks, there are practical steps producers can take to mitigate the negative outcomes of a disaster. On a national scale, FEMA has published the National Preparedness Goal that offers guidance to communities and states on how to prevent, protect, mitigate, respond to and recover from a variety of disasters and emergencies, including terrorism. These five mission areas offer a simple outline for how one can begin to build a disaster preparedness plan. Once you have identified major vulnerabilities, begin to ask a series of "what if" questions to address your concerns. For instance, you may live in a low lying area near a river. Flooding can be mitigated but not prevented. Will you be able to evacuate all of your animals (and family)? Where would you take them? Do you have transportation, food and portable water for the animals? If you cannot evacuate all animals, will they be able to make it

through fences and reach high ground? Do you have contact with local law enforcement and emergency responders so that they are aware of your farm and can let you know when it is safe to return? Most fires are preventable. Have you contacted your local fire department for them to visit your farm and do a fire risk assessment? If your farm is near railroad tracks and toxic chemicals are spilled during a derailment, would you have time to move or evacuate your animals? Is there a method to decontaminate your animals if they survive, and will it be safe to consume their milk or meat? How can you minimize the impact of such events? Who will be your contacts and how will you be able to reach people if cell towers or phone lines are down? What kind of resources or assets do you have now, and what are you lacking? Can you and your neighbors work together as a team and make a specific plan now about how you will respond alongside each other?

WHO IS ON YOUR TEAM?

Although it may seem obvious, discuss your emergency disaster plan with family members. Decide on a common meeting point nearby in the event you all get separated, but must seek safety. Make a plan for who is responsible for what activities in the event you have time to evacuate. Who will gather animals and where? Who will transport the animals? Who will gather feed and other supplies? What route would the driver take and where would everyone meet up?

Get to know your county emergency managers and other first responders before the disaster strikes. They may help producers in the planning process during “peacetime,” and are an invaluable resource during an emergency. It is beneficial for the County Emergency Management Agency to be aware of where your farm is located, how many animals, and what kind of structures and utilities are on your property. It may also be beneficial to take free, online introductory courses on emergency management offered by FEMA (see links below). These courses address basic emergency response organization and response, and may provide credentialing for county response volunteers.

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DISASTER PREPAREDNESS SELF ASSESSMENT

1. My family and I have a disaster preparedness plan (for people, livestock & pets). We are prepared to either shelter in place or evacuate and be self sufficient for seven days or more.
 Yes No
2. I have a disaster preparedness and response plan for my farm.
 Yes No
3. Our farm has performed a risk assessment to determine what threats we are vulnerable to (natural disasters, disease outbreaks, chemical spills, etc.)
 Yes No
4. Our family/farm has a communication tree to contact each other and employees in the event of an emergency.
 Yes No
5. Our farm/clinic has a plan for evacuating livestock safely and quickly from the farm if the need arises.
 Yes No
6. Our farm/clinic has all contact phone numbers for local law enforcement, county emergency management, animal control, Extension Agents (livestock), livestock hauler, and veterinarians (for planning purposes)
 Yes No
7. I am involved with my County Emergency Management Agency’s animal disaster response team.
 Yes No
8. I have had basic Incident Command System (ICS) training.
 Yes No
9. I am aware of the laws and regulations in my state regarding animal disposal and a plan for mass mortality disposal of all of companion animals/ livestock beyond burying.
 Yes No

If you have a veterinarian, incorporate them into your plan and share your plan with them. They may be able to offer aid in the event of an emergency.

Extension agents are also a very important team member and can work with multiple farms in your area to develop a county wide plan, including the identification of shelters accepting large animals, pets, available resources in the area, and may assist in the response and recovery efforts (including Farm Service Agency or others for disaster assistance). Penn State Extension has published a useful and thorough guide to help producers plan for disasters. It includes checklists for a variety of resource and personnel needs, inventory lists, a log for emergency contact phone numbers, guides for developing farm maps, and an outline for creating an action plan:

<http://extension.psu.edu/prepare/readyag>

There is not a tab for small ruminants, but the other tabs cover most of the pertinent information for sheep and goat producers. If you are not able to download, contact Penn Extension, and they can provide a copy.

As you work through your disaster plan, for every “what if” scenario, consider how your goals, actions and action plans can be woven into the prevention, protection and mitigation of a disaster on your farm.



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TRAINING LINKS

Please keep copies of all of your certificates of completion for any courses that you take. For involvement in local, county, or state teams, you will need to show proof of training to be able to participate.

ICS 100-Introduction to the Incident Command System, (free training) § <http://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-100.b>

ICS 200-Enables personnel to operate efficiently during an incident or event within the Incident Command System (free training) <http://www.training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-200.b>

ICS 10A-Animals in Disasters: Awareness and Preparedness (free training) <http://www.training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-10.a>

ICS 11-Animals in Disasters, Module B: Community Planning (free training) <http://www.training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-11.a>

ICS 111-Livestock in Disasters (free training) <http://www.training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-111.a>

AVMA booklet:

https://ebusiness.avma.org/files/productdownloads/STWF_English.pdf

“Better be despised for too anxious apprehensions, than ruined by too confident security.”

-Edmund Burke

FEMA links for disaster preparedness:

Risk assessments: https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1464972786707d686a56e54284eb815b1624224dfaa5b/RiskAssessment_KeyTopics_Bulletin_Final.pdf

National Response Framework from FEMA https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1443624338930-32e9ed3ac6cf8e95d7d463ed9b9685df/NationalPreparednessGoal_InformationSheet_2015.pdf

In the next issue, inventory and supply checklists will be provided, and responses to and recovery from disasters will be addressed. In the meantime, begin going through the Penn Extension Workbook, take introductory ICS courses and FEMA's "Animals in Disasters" courses. Also included is the American Veterinary Medical Association's booklet, "Saving the Whole Family," which is also available in Spanish.

Joanna Davis, D.V.M. – is an emergency coordinator for USDA APHIS Veterinary Services in Conyers, Ga

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