

# Disaster Preparedness for Livestock

Greta Cook, Vice-President  
Washington State Animal Response Team (WASART)  
[www.washingtontart.org](http://www.washingtontart.org)

Our animals rely on us to take care of their daily needs, and during a disaster it is critical that we have a plan to help ensure their safety and survival. Fortunately the process of disaster preparedness is basically the same for humans as it is for large and small animals; Learn about the hazards (earthquakes, floods, windstorms, wildfires, hazardous materials etc.) in your area and the steps you can take to prepare for them; Make a plan; Build an emergency kit; Practice your plan and get involved.

Animals are considered property and since emergency personnel are directed to care for persons first, then property, they may be able to assist you but not your animals. Ultimately the safety and wellbeing of your animals is your responsibility. A dog or cat is more likely to be rescued by emergency personnel, whereas a goat, llama, cow or horse may be left because no one has the handling experience, means to transport or facilities to contain the animals if they are rescued.

**Hazards** – Flooding is a hazard we have all seen on the evening news. If you live in a flood prone area, you are probably familiar with what actions are needed to keep safe. Other hazards may be new or unexpected in your area.

Talk to your fire, police, county, and state officials to learn what hazards they are preparing for such as land slides, chemical spills from train derailment or traffic accidents, and dam failures. Learn what plans if any they have in place to care for livestock and pets and what they expect of you as the animal's owner.

After determining what hazards might impact you at home, think about those that might impact you while at work, school or when traveling. Where you are when disaster strikes will affect your response.

And since disasters come in all sizes, and can happen any time of the day or night, now is the time to start preparing.

**Disaster Plan** - Prepare to be self sufficient for 3 days to 2 weeks or more.

*Sheltering in place* – may be your best option or your only option if you are unable to leave or are told to stay put by local authorities.

- Do a hazard hunt and identify things that need to be moved or removed, secured or repaired; heavy object stored on high shelves can fall and cause injuries or block exits during an earthquake; roofing materials leaning against a barn can become projectiles in a windstorm; flood waters will pick up any object not secured and chemicals spilled will quickly contaminate water the animals are standing in; brush, dried grasses and lumber will easily accelerate a barn fire or wildland fire; cold temperatures can freeze the water supply causing dehydration and higher feed requirements.
- Survey your property to identify the most secure places to keep your animals depending upon the hazards you may experience. Locate high ground and areas clear of overhanging limbs and power lines. If you do not have safe areas perhaps you can

make arrangements with a neighbor who does. Have supplies on hand to rig up temporary containment in case your fencing is compromised such as electrical tape and step in posts, pipe panels or wire mesh. Think about what you already have on hand to use and plan to acquire any other needed supplies.

- Find a secure and easily accessible location to store your Disaster Kit (see list).

*Evacuation* – may be required at a moments notice and takes planning to happen quickly and effectively.

- Have several places to go out of the hazard area. Make arrangements with friends, family or boarding facilities in advance and have their number in your cell phone to let them know you are coming.
- Map several evacuation routes avoiding heavily traveled roads. Keep in mind that emergency vehicles may block or restrict road access while responding to the disaster.
- Vehicles need to be “road-ready” with a full tank of fuel. Gas stations may be closed or have long lines.
- Have containers for smaller animals easily accessible and train animals ahead of time to load quickly with different people and at night.
- Leave early to avoid heavy traffic.
- Practice your plan to see how long it takes to get on the road and to your destination.

If you do not have transportation for your animals, consider talking to neighbors or friends in your area who could transport your animals to another location or shelter. Likewise, you can offer to assist if you have extra trailer space and know of a neighbor who may need animals transported.

Prioritize which animals go first, second, third if evacuation time is limited or due to transport space limitations. Talk this over with family members and anyone who works with your animals or might be involved with their evacuation. Post an Evacuation Notice on brightly colored paper to let rescue teams know you have left and they can move on to search the next house.

If you must evacuate and leave animals behind help the rescue teams by:

- Noting where you are going and how you can be contacted.
- Describe your animals and where they are located.
- If any animals have special needs i.e. diet considerations or medication requirements, include this information in the notice.
- Describe which animals have priority for evacuation if all can not be removed at once.
- Leave extra feed and water easily accessible so animals can be fed if they are safe and secure on site and do not need to be evacuated to a shelter.

These principles apply whether your animals live on your property or somewhere else. If you board your animals at another location, talk to the owner about their disaster plan. Learn what they expect of you and what you can expect from them. If they do not have a disaster plan, share this information with them and offer to help develop a plan.

**Identify your animals** – and keep a copy of the information in your disaster kit and with an out-of-state contact.

- Physical descriptions - Document breed, sex, age, coat color, height, weight, distinguishing marks and scars, freeze marks or brands and their location, microchip number, tattoo number and location, ear notch or tag, breed registration number and pertinent health issues.

- Photograph all sides showing distinguishing marks and differences in coat color or appearance if there are seasonal changes. Including yourself in one of the pictures can help prove ownership. Update photos periodically.
- Permanent ID methods will vary depending upon the species of animal.
  - Freeze marking is a permanent, painless, unalterable way to identify equines (horses, mules, donkeys) as individuals. The unique mark is easily visible and acts as a deterrent to theft as well as positively identifying the animal. A special branding iron holds a breed or state symbol and a series of alpha-symbols that represent the registry or state number. The iron is chilled in liquid nitrogen then applied to the neck. The cold damages the hair follicle so that the hair will grow in white on dark colored horses or will be bald (like a hot brand) on light colored horses. The brand is registered with the state and Kryo Kinetics USA LLC. More information can be found at: [www.kryokineticsusa.com](http://www.kryokineticsusa.com)
  - Ranch brands or hot brands identify a location i.e. the ranch, and need to be registered with the state brand department. The brand fee must be renewed periodically to keep ownership or someone else can claim the brand.
  - Microchips can be inserted in any animal and are a cost effective method of identification. Universal scanners have the ability to read chips from the various manufactures. The chip is about the size of a grain of rice and is inserted with a needle. Once a chip is inserted into your animal the number needs to be registered with the manufacturer or a recovery network. There is a fee to register and to change information such as when an animal is sold. For more information about microchipping and safety concerns, go to the American Veterinary Medical Association website at: [www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org)
  - Tattoos are less commonly used today and can fade or be hard to read.

**Temporary ID Methods** - include using break away halters and collars with temporary ID tags, livestock marking crayon, non-toxic, non-water-soluble spray paint, to write your phone number on the animals' side, weaving a note with your contact information into the animal's hair, and writing your phone number with a permanent marker on the animal's hooves.

**A Portable Disaster Kit** - is your supply kit that travels with you if you must evacuate and can be used when sheltering in place. Keep in a safe and secure but easily accessible location. Have a minimum 2 week supply of feed, supplements and medication and a 3 day supply for your trailer/vehicle. Store as much water as possible and think about alternate sources such as streams and ponds.

Remember to only use your kit in an emergency. The suggested list will help you get started. Add items that work for you and your situation. Be creative, network, share resources and budget for additional items.

- Plastic garbage can with wheels or other sturdy portable container
- Feed and water containers
- Halter and lead rope or other appropriate control device
- Temporary identification tags
- First aid kit and book – ask your vet for suggestions and how to use the items
- Shampoo to remove chemicals in flood situations
- Towels
- Brushes
- Blanket

- Portable crank radio, battery backup
- Flashlight or headlamp, batteries
- Fire extinguisher
- Tools – hammer, shovel, wire cutters, knife or multi tool with knife
- Duct tape
- Rope – 50' or more
- Tarp
- Gloves – leather and gripper type
- Face mask or bandana
- Eye protection
- Camera for documentation
- Important records kept in a water proof pouch
  - Registry papers, identification records, photos to help prove ownership and for lost posters
  - Medical and vaccinations records, special feeding instructions
  - Maps of your area with predetermined evacuation routes
  - Emergency Contact numbers - family, friends, neighbors, your out-of-state contact, veterinarians, farrier, animal control, shelters, local and out of area boarding facilities, local Emergency Management, Dept of Agriculture state veterinarian and brand inspector, etc.
  - Emergency medical release form authorizing medical treatment for your animals up to a specified dollar amount if you are out of the area or can not be reached. Ask your vet for suggestion.

**“ICE” In Case of Emergency** - Add contact numbers to your cell phone under ICE or ICE Animal. This is an international designation that emergency responders look for on a personal cell phone if you are found injured and unable to speak or are unconscious. Include your vet and any care takers for your animals as well as for yourself who you would like called on your behalf. Starting with a period in front of the letter (.ICE) will make sure this is the first entry in you phone address book making it easy to locate. If you have more than one entry, you can add numerical numbers to each ICE entry. ICE 2, ICE 3, ICE Animal 2, ICE Animal 3 will then show up in that order

**Cash** - may be the only way to pay for needed supplies in a disaster. Keep some on hand to pay for feed, fuel, transport or other assistance as power outages may make credit transactions impossible.

**Lost animal** - may be hiding for days or have become disoriented in the disaster. Check daily with the animal shelters and put up posters with a picture and description of your animal and how you can be contacted.

**Found animals** - can be taken to the nearest shelter or you can notify the shelter giving a detailed description of the animal and its location. Animals that are stressed, sick or injured can act unpredictably and should be handled by rescue teams that have the necessary training and equipment.

**What is normal?** - Learn what is “normal” for your animals when they are healthy. Ask your vet to show you how to take your animals vital signs if you are unfamiliar. Pulse, respiration, temperature, capillary refill time, and gut sounds are the basics. Knowing what is normal for your animals will help you determine if they need medical attention after a disaster.

**Develop a neighborhood plan** - by identifying available resources such as medical training, animal handling experience, generators, safe holding areas, tractor or other heavy equipment. Identify neighbors with special needs i.e. impaired mobility, small children, health issues. Develop a “buddy system” with a friend or neighbor that will look after your animals if you are unavailable and you will do the same for them. Develop a “buddy system” with a friend or neighbor that will look after your animals if you are unavailable and you will do the same for them. Take the Map Your Neighborhood training for more suggestions and an easy to use planning template. <http://emd.wa.gov/myn/index.shtml>

**Review and update plans yearly** - and when you get a new animal. Send updated photos, contacts and other information to your out-of-state contact via email or on a CD. Refresh your feed and water supplies every 3 to 6 months and medication as often as needed.

**Training with organizations** - such as American Red Cross, American Humane Association, Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), FEMA online courses and local animal shelters can strengthen your ability to respond more effectively to a disaster. Get the help you need to be able to handle your animals in a safe and efficient manner.

**Get involved with your community** - and learn what emergency plans are in place. Let your community planners know that you have animals and want to help develop or update plans so animals are included. Funding is often limited and your encouragement and offers to assist will help get the ball rolling. Support organizations in your area that provide animal disaster response such as the Washington State Animal Response Team (WASART).

**Practice your plan** - keep adding to your Disaster Kit, get comfortable driving your vehicle and trailer in tight spots, renew your first aid and CPR training, and get involved with your neighborhood and community planning.

### **Training Resources:**

- WA State Animal Response Team (WASART) a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization *helping animals and their owners in disasters* through disaster response, volunteer training, community planning and public education [www.washingtonsart.org](http://www.washingtonsart.org)
- American Humane Association (AHA) training in animal emergency services and sheltering <http://www.americanhumane.org>
- Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) personal and community education and training <http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/>
- FEMA Independent Study Program – free online courses on Animals in Disaster, general preparedness <http://training.fema.gov/IS/crslist.asp>
- Large Animal Rescue – calendar of Large Animal Rescue training dates <http://www.saveyourhorse.com/wholearn.htm>
- WA State Emergency Management Division – training calendar and publications [http://www.emd.wa.gov/preparedness/prepare\\_index.shtml](http://www.emd.wa.gov/preparedness/prepare_index.shtml)
- American Red Cross <http://www.redcross.org>

### **Animal Resources:**

- Emergency Planning Workbook from TheHorse.com and EquineU.com <http://www.thehorse.com/pdf/emergency/emergency.pdf>

- Barnyard Animal Rescue Plan  
[www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/barnyard.html](http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/barnyard.html)
- American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Disaster Preparedness Resources  
<http://www.avma.org/disaster/>
- Livestock Handling Tips to Minimize Animal Stress brochure from CA Dept of Food and Agriculture  
[www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/Animal\\_Health/pdfs/lstockhandling.pdf](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/Animal_Health/pdfs/lstockhandling.pdf)
- ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (888) 426-4435. A \$60 consultation fee may apply. [www.asPCA.org](http://www.asPCA.org)
- California Department of Food and Agriculture – Disaster Preparedness for Pets and Livestock. [www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/Animal\\_Health/DP\\_for\\_Pets\\_and\\_Livestock.html](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/Animal_Health/DP_for_Pets_and_Livestock.html)  
[www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/Animal\\_Health/Disaster\\_Preparedness.html#Haulers](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/Animal_Health/Disaster_Preparedness.html#Haulers)
- WSDA Livestock Identification - Brand Information and Missing or Stolen Livestock information. <http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/Livestock/MissingLivestock.htm>

### **General Resources:**

- NOAA National Weather Service – forecasts, storm tracking, weather safety, publications <http://www.weather.gov/>
- Emergency Resource Guide – general preparedness booklet for specific hazards  
[http://emd.wa.gov/publications/pubed/emergency\\_resources\\_guide.pdf](http://emd.wa.gov/publications/pubed/emergency_resources_guide.pdf)
- 3 Days 3 Ways – be ready to survive on your own for a minimum of 3 days following a disaster. <http://www.govlink.org/3days3ways/>
- Map Your Neighborhood – helping neighborhoods prepare for disasters  
<http://emd.wa.gov/myn/index.shtml>
- Ready – Prepare, Plan, Stay Informed. <http://www.ready.gov/>