
Emergency Preparedness for Farm Animals

Farm animals are vulnerable to natural disasters such as extreme heat and cold weather, and emergencies such as hazardous materials spills. In the event of an emergency, animals may need to be sheltered, cared for, or transported to safety. Plan ahead by speaking with your veterinarian and contact the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association at: www.canadianveterinarians.net for assistance.

Know Your Risks

Understand the likely disaster risks in your community and region. Identify the hazards to help you prepare and to reduce the impact when sudden events do occur. The types of hazards vary depending on where you live, but can include:

- flooding from nearby rivers, canals and lakes,
- grassland, forest, and farm building fires,
- severe storms, high wind, tornadoes, heavy rain and blizzards,
- hazardous waste spills and dangerous goods exposures, and
- diseases or pests that affect animals and crops.

Having plans for sheltering in place, and evacuating with and without the farm animals will help you to act quickly, protect your animals, and reduce the stress of the emergency or disaster. In each case, make sure that you have adequate and safe fencing or pens to separate and group animals.

Emergency Plans

- Make an emergency plan to protect your property, facilities, and animals. Create a contact list of emergency telephone numbers, including your employees, neighbours, veterinarian, poison control, local animal shelter, animal care and control, transportation resources, and local volunteer organizations.
- Include an out-of-town contact person who is unlikely to be affected by the same emergency. Make sure all this information is written down, and that everyone on your farm and your contact person has a copy.
- Review, test, and update your emergency plans, supplies, and information regularly.

Sheltering In Place

If you remain on your property during an emergency, depending on the type of event and time constraints, you need to decide whether to confine animals in a shelter or leave them outdoors. Confining too many and different types of animals to one shelter increases the risk of aggressive behaviour and outbreak of contagious diseases.

Survey your property for the best locations. Ensure that the animals have access to sufficient food and clean water, access to higher areas in flood events, and access to low lying areas in case of high winds. Livestock may be safer in a pasture instead of evacuating them. A safe pasture has:

- native tree species only; exotic trees uproot easily,
- no overhead power lines or poles,
- no debris or sources of blowing debris,
- no barbed wire fencing. Woven wire fencing is best, and
- enough open space so livestock have unrestricted movement to avoid blowing debris.

Ensure you have enough food and essential supplies for you and your family for at least three days. If your property does not meet these criteria, you may need to evacuate the animals on the advice of your veterinarian or local emergency management officials.

Evacuation With Animals

There may be situations where an evacuation is sudden. To quickly evacuate animals you need to have the right equipment such as chutes and portable ramps prepared as soon as possible. Make sure your family and employees are familiar with at least two evacuation routes. Contact your Community Emergency Management Coordinator through your local municipality. For general information contact [Emergency Management Ontario](#).

- Ensure that the electricity on the farm is turned off.
- Arrange in advance for a place to shelter your animals. Plan ahead and work within your community to establish safe shelters for farm animals, such as fairgrounds, other farms, racetracks, and exhibition centers.
- Ensure that sufficient feed, water and medical supplies are available at the destination. You are responsible for the welfare of your farm animals.
- Be ready to leave as soon as an evacuation is ordered. During the emergency roads may be restricted to emergency service vehicles and closed to other traffic.
- Set up safe transportation. You will need access to trucks, trailers, portable loading ramps, and other vehicles suitable for transporting each type of animal, along with experienced handlers and drivers.
- If animals are evacuated to a centralized location such as a fairground for shelter and will co-mingle with other animals of unknown health status, try to:

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- make sure your animals have identification (e.g. ear tags or brands), or use a permanent marker to put your phone number or unique mark on their bodies,
 - minimize the contact among animals from different premises,
 - protect feed and water from contact with wildlife, and verify the health and vaccination status of any animals which must be co-mingled,
 - handle any mortalities in a manner to minimize the spread of contagious diseases,
 - monitor the health and well being of the animals on a daily basis, whether sheltered in place or evacuated,
 - seek appropriate veterinary medical advice and services on suspicion of an animal disease problem, and
 - provide a generator with a safely stored supply of fuel, especially if you have milking equipment or other electrical equipment necessary to the well being of your animals.

Evacuation Without Animals

- Leave at least three days worth of feed and water that does not require power.
- Open gates or reroute fencing to create a large area for unrestricted movement.
- Close barn doors to prevent animals from going back inside where they can be trapped.
- Connect with your emergency contacts about care and feeding for the animals.
- Have readily available handling equipment for first responders to free any trapped animals.

Supplies and Emergency Kits

Make an emergency kit according to your needs, store emergency supplies in one location, and let everyone know where it is. Check and update contents regularly. The Emergency Kit should include:

- A current list of all animals, including their location and records of feeding, vaccinations, and tests. Make this information available at various locations on the farm.
- Supplies for temporary identification of your animals, such as plastic neckbands and permanent markers to label animals with your name and telephone number.
- Basic first aid supplies/kit.
- Handling equipment such as halters, cages, blankets, and bolt-cutters to quickly free animals in an emergency.
- Water, feed, buckets, tools and supplies needed for sanitation.
- Safety and emergency items for your vehicles and trailers.
- Cell phones, flashlights, portable radios (with a weather radio band) or [Weatheradio](#), and batteries. Know the radio broadcast frequencies and local weather information telephone numbers.

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- Emergency supplies for your family, including water – drinking, cooking and hygiene, non-perishable food, documents, identification, cash, personal supplies and medication

Early Farm Preparation

- Make sure every animal has durable and visible identification and create a file with all animal identification and ownership records.
- Reinforce your house, barn, and outbuildings with hurricane straps and other measures. Perform regular safety inspections on all utilities, buildings, and facilities on your farm.
- If possible, remove barbed wire and consider re-routing permanent fencing, so that animals may move to high ground in a flood and to low-lying areas during high winds.
- Install a hand pump with enough large containers to water your animals for at least a week. Municipal water supplies and wells may be contaminated during an emergency.
- Check water wells to see that they are secure from flood water contamination.
- Secure or remove anything that could become blowing debris; including trailers, propane tanks, and other large objects. If you have feed troughs or other large containers, fill them with water before any high wind event.
- Chemicals should be stored in secured areas, preferably on high ground, shelved off the ground, and protected so that chemical spills will not result in any runoff or seepage.
- Label hazardous materials and place them all in the same safe area. Provide local fire, rescue and emergency services with the location and a list of hazardous materials.
- Post a property map in each building, showing key services (power and water), access points, all building and equipment locations, and dangerous chemical storage.
- Post an emergency contact list in each building. Include neighbours, animal handlers/transporters, veterinarians and feed suppliers.
- Store all records (animal ID, contact lists and site map) onsite, offsite and digitally.
- Set up meeting places in case an evacuation is ordered, with feed, water and shelter for any evacuated animals. Make sure everyone knows where to meet and consider the weather.
- Create safe transportation methods. If possible, practice loading and transporting animals.

Recovery Assistance and Financial Preparedness

Recovering from a disaster is difficult. A conditional grant program can provide financial assistance after emergencies and disasters that cause uninsurable loss and damage. Speak to an insurance agent about your specific needs. Know your insurance policy. Make sure your home, vehicle, business and belongings are protected.

If possible, set up an emergency savings account to cover temporary expenses while you are out of your home. If you can, keep emergency cash handy in case banking services are unavailable. If you are evacuated, keep all receipts for additional expenses

Fire Considerations for Animal Housing

- Use professionals for all wiring and electrical modifications to barns, livestock housing structures and shops.
- Prohibit smoking in and around barns.
- Store combustibles such as hay, shavings, manure, gas, oil, propane, paint, cutting torches away from the barn.
- Minimize the number of heat and electrical appliances in the barn that risk sparking or causing fires.
- Grain dust will ignite and explode. Do not try to auger grains during a fire.
- Map the location of fire extinguishers, and mark with signage. Extinguishers should be located in all barns, shops, and structures. All staff and family members need to know fire extinguisher locations and how to use them.
- A structure can be completely engulfed in less than six minutes.
- Panicked animals do not fear fire and will not leave a barn on their own.
- Most animals are killed from smoke inhalation and those who do survive rarely recover.
- Never put personal safety in jeopardy to save an animal.

Wildfires

Wildfires spread across forests, grasslands, and fields very quickly. Farms near dense forests, wildlands and grasslands areas should be prepared for wildfires and know the steps to minimize risks and losses. There are several proactive measures that can be completed in advance to prepare producers for a wildfire emergency including:

- Have contact information for prearranged off-farm animal holding areas.
- Review wildfire history in your region.
- Identify and maintain equipment that may help fight an approaching grassfire or wildfire (e.g., disk, harrow, tractor, water truck).
- Reduce vegetation and wood debris within 10 to 30 meters of farm structures.
- Create firebreaks by clearing vegetation and expose bare soil to help slow wildfire spread.
- Predetermine evacuation sites and routes that may be used for animal movement and have a map of the identified areas readily available for all staff, family and first responders.
- Store hay, straw, beddings/shaving outside the barn in a dry, covered area, if possible.
- Have water and feed readily available or at the pre-arranged lairage site(s) to ensure that all affected livestock have sufficient feed and water.
- Create a detailed inventory of livestock and a list of emergency contacts prior to any wildfire.
- In wildfire susceptible areas, install irrigation/ sprinkler system to help suppress fire.

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Emergency Management Program

Emergency management in the Ontario Public Service includes five components: mitigation, prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. OMAFRA has developed the Emergency Management Program (EMP) Plan that addresses both agricultural emergencies and continuity of operations. The plan combines the Food and Agriculture Emergency Response Plan (FAERP) and Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP).

OMAFRA has responsibility for emergencies related to: farm animal disease, agricultural plant disease and pest infestation and food contamination.

OMAFRA maintains a number of supplement plans under EMP including; Human Health Pandemic, Nuclear Incident, Border Closure, Foreign Animal Disease and Food Contamination.

OMAFRA have a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week notification protocol to ensure prompt notification and response to any agricultural emergency or business continuity incident, by the Ministry Incident Management Team (MIMT).

The Ministry Emergency Operations Centre (MEOC) provides an integrated environment of information management and communication tools required to respond to emergencies in a time when speed and efficiency are critical.

Additional Links

- Animal Health Canada (AHC): [AHC Animal Health Emergencies](#)
[AHC Livestock Evacuation Documentation Form](#) , [AHC Create a Farm Site Map](#)
- Beef Farmers of Ontario (BFO): [How To Prepare For Wildfires And Livestock Evacuations](#)
- The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA): [CVMA Website](#)
- Farm & Food Care: [FFCO Livestock Emergencies Webpage](#), [FFCO Livestock Transportation Emergencies Manual](#), [FFCO Livestock Transportation Emergency Contact list.pdf](#)
- The Feather Board Command Centre: www.fbcc.ca
- NOFIA: [Emergency Livestock Response Plan for First Responders](#)

Potential Notifications

Organization	Contact Number
CFIA to report transport accident and plan for animals	1-877- 814-2342
OMAFRA for deadstock disposal concerns	1-877-424-1300
OMAFRA General Support Information	1-877-424-1300
Provincial Animal Welfare Services (PAWS)	1-833-926-4625
Beef Farmers of Ontario	519-824-0334

Ontario Sheep Farmers	519-836-0043
Veal Farmers of Ontario	519-824-2942
Ontario Pork	519-767-4600
Dairy Farmers of Ontario	905-821-8970

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