

Tips for Horse Owners to Prepare for Hurricane Season

LSU and the Louisiana State Animal Response Team provide readiness guidelines.

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Update 8/25/11:

Click here to view the American Association of Equine Practitioner's resources for horse owners in the path of Hurricane Irene.

Original Article:

With the hurricane season upon us, it is important for horse owners to ready themselves in advance for evacuation and other recommended tasks related to hurricane preparedness. Here are some tips from the Louisiana State Animal Response Team (LSART) and LSU School of Veterinary Medicine for effectively preparing horse owners in areas prone to hurricane damage:

Be sure your horse is current regarding vaccinations for tetanus and the encephalitis viruses (Eastern, Western, and West Nile).

Network a plan with the horse or farm animal-owning neighbors in your parish or county (get to know your neighbors, plan a meeting, talk through different scenarios, and identify the local resources for dealing with disaster situations) and be prepared to help one another.

Be sure that your horse has two forms of identification: (1) Permanent identification such as a microchip, tattoo or brand, and (2) Luggage-type tag secured to the tail and halter (be sure to use a leather halter for break-away purposes). Fetlock tags are useful and can be acquired on-line or from a local farm supply store. Be sure to place your name, address, and phone number (phone # of someone out of state is best in the event of phone outages) legibly on the tags.

Be sure to store the record for the microchip number (i.e., Coggins form) in an accessible location (it is recommended to keep a second copy of this information with a family member or friend in a distant location but where it will be easily accessible).

If you plan to evacuate (and you should ALWAYS do this if possible) in the event of a storm, have a destination and route(s) mapped out well in advance. It is important to evacuate your horses a sufficient distance from the coast and a good general guideline is north of Interstate 10. January to March would be good months to prepare this plan. Arrange to leave a minimum of 72 hours before the arrival of the storm. The worst thing that can happen to you is to get stuck in traffic with a trailer full of horses and a hurricane approaching. Provide your neighbors with your evacuation contact information.

Prepare a waterproof emergency animal care kit with all the items you normally use, including medications, salves or ointments, vetrap, bandages, tape, etc. Place the kit in a safe place where you can easily access it after a storm.

Start early to clean up your property and remove all debris that may be tossed around by storm and hurricane force winds. Be careful of down power lines which can be "live" and represent a danger to people and animals.

If you plan to weather the storm at home (this is not usually recommended), there are some general guidelines to follow: The choice of keeping your horse in a barn or an open field is up to you. Use common sense, taking into consideration barn structure, trees, power lines, condition of surrounding properties and the likelihood of the property and structure to flood. Farms subject to storm surge or flash flooding should turn their horses out so horses are not trapped and thus drown.

Remove all items from the barn aisle and walls, and store them in a safe place.

Have at least a two to three week supply of hay (wrapped in plastic or waterproof tarp) and feed (stored in plastic water-tight containers).

Place these supplies in the highest (out of reach of flood waters) and driest area possible.

Fill clean plastic garbage cans with water, secure the tops, and place them in the barn for use after the storm.

Have an emergency barn kit containing a chain saw and fuel, hammer(s), saw, nails, screws and fencing materials. Place this kit in a secure area before the storm hits so that it is easily accessible after the storm.

Be sure to have an ample supply of flashlights and batteries and other non-perishable items.

Listen to local radio stations in your area. If Internet access is available, access state-run websites that contain accurate status information (i.e., State Police, State University, State Dept. of Agriculture) and take all cautions/warning serious and act accordingly.

Visit www.equine.vetmed.lsu.edu for more detailed information regarding horse hurricane preparations and other emergency and health-related information.

Further Reading

Emergency Identification Plan

Emergency Preparedness: Survival Stories