

Ike's Impact on Texas Horses

The latest news on the devastating hurricane.

September 16, 2008

While it's unknown yet how many horses died during Hurricane Ike's landfall this past weekend in Texas, reports are beginning to surface regarding relief operations for equines.

Here's what is known as of September 15:

- * Many of the emergency animal shelters for large and small animals remain operational, and livestock producers continue to generously volunteer their pastures and barns for evacuees. Early information from shelters indicates that more than 550 livestock and about 1,200 small animals were provided refuge. This does not include people sheltering pets in temporary housing, or individuals providing sheltering space. Evacuees who still need to locate sheltering space should call 2-1-1.
- * The Texas Veterinary Medical Association Foundation is asking for assistance buying fuel and generators for veterinary clinics hit by the storm. Due to massive power outages that are expected to last through the week, the Texas Veterinary Medical Association is delivering generators to veterinarians in areas that were most affected. Those wanting to assist in this effort can call the Texas Veterinary Medical Association Foundation at (512) 452-4224.
- * At the request of the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC), members of a National Veterinary Response Team (NVRT) are now being deployed by the federal government to assist in Texas recovery operations. Animal response teams from both Florida and New Mexico have volunteered to provide assistance to Texas via the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) system and are awaiting final authorization.
- * A joint TAHC and USDA Veterinary Services team is working in the Beaumont area, assessing large animal issues from the air and ground. The scope of livestock death loss is not yet known. Another team will be assessing the western side of the storm area when re-entry is allowed.
- * In several storm-ravaged counties, large numbers of cattle and horses caught in the storm surge either died or fences are down, and animals are loose or stranded. The TAHC is coordinating carcass disposal with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Reports of dead livestock should be made to the TAHC's Area Command Center at (800) 550-8242, ext 296. Callers will be asked to provide the location, species of animal, approximate number, and if possible, the GPS coordinates of the site.
- * The Texas Agrilife Extension, Texas Department of Agriculture and livestock industry groups have established "Operation No Fences: Hurricane Ike Horse and Cattle Relief" to collect feed, hay and water trough donations. For more information or to make a donation, call the Texas 4H Foundation at (979) 845-1213.
- * Producers who wish to donate hay, or people in need of hay, are encouraged to call the Texas Department of Agriculture's Hay Hotline at (877) 429-1998. Also, visit www.tda.state.tx.us/hayhotline for more information.