



## **Hurricane Season Preparation for Florida Horse Farms**

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The impact of 2004/2005 hurricane season on the horse industry underscores the importance of disaster planning. The leading cause of death of large animals during hurricane Andrew in 1992 included animals killed in collapsed barns, electrocution, kidney failure secondary to dehydration and animals hit and killed on roadways or tangled in barbed wire after escaping from their pasture. In the recent storms several horses died when trees fell and crushed the barn in which they were stabled. During hurricane Katrina many horses died when left in the barn as flood waters entered the area. Prolonged power outages caused a water shortage on farms that did not have a generator to run their well. Each farm should have a written disaster plan to optimize safety and survival of all animals.

### ***Before the Storm***

#### Horses

- **Vaccination:** All horses should have a tetanus toxoid vaccine within the last year. Due to the significant increase in mosquitoes after massive rainfall, all horses should receive West Nile virus and Eastern / Western Encephalitis vaccinations at the beginning of hurricane season. If your horse has not been vaccinated in 4-6 months, they should receive a booster now.
- **Coggins test:** A negative Coggins test is necessary if the horse needs to be evacuated to a community shelter or cross the state line. In the recent hurricanes the Commissioner of Agriculture (Charles Bronson) has waived this requirement for exit from the state under evacuation circumstances.
- **Health Certificate:** A health certificate is required to cross the state line. This may be necessary for evacuation of coastal areas.
- **Identification:** Each horse should be identified with at least one, if not all of the following:
  - A leather halter with name/farm information in a zip lock bag secured to the halter with duct tape.
  - A luggage tag with the horse/farm name and phone number braided into tail. (Make sure this is water proof).
  - Photos of each horse as proof of ownership highlighting obvious identifying marks.
- **Evacuation:** Evacuation of flood planes and coastal areas is recommended. Evacuation must occur 48 hours before hurricane force

winds occur in the area. Transportation of horses when wind gusts exceed 40 mph is dangerous.

- Contact the Emergency Evacuation Relocation List at [http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/ai/adc/adc\\_emerg\\_manag\\_links.shtml](http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/ai/adc/adc_emerg_manag_links.shtml) for the entire southeast or [www.SSHC.org/evac](http://www.SSHC.org/evac) -The Sunshine State Horse Council, Inc. (813-651-5953) for more information.
- Should horses be left in the pasture or placed in the barn? If the pasture has good fencing and limited trees, it is probably best to leave the horses outside. Well constructed pole-barns or concrete block barns may provide safety from flying debris, but the horses may become trapped if the wind collapses the building.
  - Electrical lines: Keep horses out of pastures with power lines.
  - Trees with shallow roots will fall easily under hurricane force winds and can injure the horse or destroy the fencing.
  - Fencing: Do not keep horses in barbed wire or electric fencing during a storm.
  - Fire Ants and snakes will search for high ground during flooding. Carefully look over the premises and feed for these potential dangers.

#### Farm

- Water
  - Each horse should have 12-20 gallons per day stored.
  - Fill garbage cans with plastic liners and fill all water troughs.
  - Have a generator to run the well if you have large numbers of horses.
  - Keep chlorine bleach on hand to add to contaminated water if necessary. To purify water add 2 drops of chlorine bleach per quart of water and let stand for 30 minutes.
- Feed storage
  - Store a minimum of 72 hours of feed and hay (7 days is best). It is very possible that roads will be closed because of down power lines and trees, limiting access to feed stores. Cover hay with water proof tarps and place it on pallets. Keep grain in water tight containers.
- Secure all movable objects
  - Remove all items from hallways.
  - Jumps and lawn furniture should be secured in a safe place.
  - Place large vehicles/ tractors/ trailers in an open field where trees cannot fall on them.
- Turn off electrical power to barn
- Emergency First Aid Kit
  - Bandages (leg wraps and quilts)
  - Antiseptics
  - Scissors/Knife
  - Topical antibiotic ointments
  - Tranquilizers

- Pain Relievers (phenylbutazone or Banamine®)
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Extra halters/lead ropes
- Clean towels
- Fly spray
- Emergency Tools
  - Chain saw / fuel
  - Hammer/nails
  - Fence repair materials
  - Wire cutters / tool box / pry bar
  - Fire Extinguisher
  - Duct tape

### **After the Storm**

- Carefully inspect each horse for injury to eyes and limbs.
- Walk the pasture to remove debris. Make sure that no Red Maple tree branches fell in the pasture. Just a few wilted leaves are very toxic to horses. Clinical signs of Red Maple toxicity are dark chocolate colored gums, anorexia and red urine.
- Inspect the property for down power lines.
- Take pictures of storm damage.
- If your horse is missing, contact the local animal control or disaster response team.
- For more information regarding general emergency management in the state of Florida contact <http://www.floridadisaster.org>

### **Who is available to help?**

Each county in the state of Florida has an Emergency Support Function officer (ESF-17) in charge of animal emergencies. They report to the Emergency Command Officer for the county who reports to the state veterinarian Dr. Holt. The College of Veterinary Medicine has formed a Emergency Response Team per the request of the Governor. This team "VETS" Veterinary Emergency Treatment Service will provide immediate veterinary care until the community is able to stand on its own.

Under severe conditions Dr. Holt can activate the federal veterinary rescue team VMAT (Veterinary Medical Assistance Team) <http://www.avma.org/disaster/vmat>. The VMAT team was stationed just outside the perimeter of the hurricane zone with 22 veterinarians and 3 tractor trailers ready to respond when called. There are additional teams of rescue personnel such as DART (Disaster Animal Rescue Team) which is sponsored by the Humane Society of the United States <http://www.hsus.org> and Code 3 Associates. These teams are trained in rescue techniques and work with local and state emergency personnel. All of these individuals are dedicated to

assisting the community in a crisis. They can rescue horses from sink holes, air lift them from flooded areas or arrange for a water tanker to come to the farm.