

Disaster Preparedness for Horse Owners



Before a Disaster

Plan Ahead

Determine the best place for animal confinement in case of a disaster. Find alternate water sources in case power is lost and pumps are not working or have a hand pump installed. You should have a minimum of three days of feed and water on hand.

Evacuation

Decide where you want to take your horses if evacuation is necessary. Contact fairgrounds, equestrian centers, and private farms/stables about their policies and abilities to take horses temporarily in an emergency. Have several sites in mind. Familiarize yourself with several evacuation routes to your destination.

Identification

This is critical! Photograph, identify, and inventory your horses. Permanent identification such as tattoos, brands, etches hooves, or microchips are best. Temporary identification, such as tags on halters, neck bands, and duct tape with permanent writing will also work. Include your name and phone number. Keep identification information with you to verify ownership (breed registration papers may already have this information).

Medical Records and Vaccinations

Your horses need to have current vaccinations. Keep medical histories and record special dosing instructions, allergies, and dietary requirements. Write down contact information for your vet.

Vehicles

Keep trailers and vans well-maintained, full of gas, and ready to move at all times. Be sure your animals will load. If you don't have your own vehicles, make arrangements with local companies or neighbors before disaster strikes.

Fire Preparation

In high risk areas, clear fire breaks around your house, barns, and property lines. Keep firefighting tools in one location.



Flood Preparation

Identify available high ground on your property or other nearby evacuation sites. Be familiar with road availability during flood conditions.

County Livestock Pass Program

Check with the county in which your ranch property resides for availability of the livestock pass program granting the vetted livestock producer passholder access to the ranch property during or following a disaster to care for shelter-in-place livestock or evacuate the livestock. Access is granted by emergency response personnel when there is no imminent danger to the passholder.

During a Disaster

- Listen to the [Emergency Alert System](#) (EAS) on the television or radio.
- Evacuate your horses early, if possible, to ensure their safety and ease your stress.
- Take all vaccination and medical records, the emergency disaster kit, and enough hay, feed, and water for three days.
- Call your destination to make sure the site is still available.
- Use roads not in use for human evacuation when you transport your horses to the sheltering site.
- If you must leave your animals, leave them in the preselected area appropriate for disaster type. Leave enough hay for 48 to 72 hours. Do not rely on automatic watering systems. Power may be lost.
- The leading causes of death in large animals during disasters are:
 - Collapsed barns,
 - Kidney failure due to dehydration,
 - Electrocution from downed power lines, and
 - Fencing failures.

After a Disaster

- Check fences to be sure they are intact. Check pastures and fences for sharp objects that could injure horses. Be aware of downed power lines, fallen trees, and debris.
- Beware of local wildlife that may have entered the area and could pose a threat.
- Familiar scents and landmarks may have changed, and animals can easily become confused and lost.
- If you find someone else's animal, isolate it from your animals until it is returned to its owner or can be examined by a veterinarian.
- Always use caution when approaching and handling strange or frightened horses. Work in pairs.
- If you have lost an animal, contact veterinarians, humane societies, stables, surrounding farms, and other facilities. Listen to the EAS for groups that may be accepting lost animals.
- Check with your veterinarian and the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), Animal Health Branch for information about possible disease outbreaks.

Practice Your Plan!

Emergency Contact Information

You will need to have your emergency contact information in one easily accessible place. This information is different in every county. By knowing the following information, you will be prepared to contact the key animal disaster resources in your county.

- County Office of Emergency Services
- County Animal Services
- County Agricultural Commissioner
- Local Animal Shelter
- Your Veterinarian, and
- Sign-up for [Emergency Wireless Alerts](#) to receive emergency and evacuation notifications.

Prepare for a Disaster

Prepare yourself and your household pets and livestock for an emergency or disaster that could cause you to evacuate your home. It is a shared responsibility to protect animals in emergencies and disasters. Prepare by making a plan. The [California Animal Response Emergency System](#) (CARES) webpage can help you prepare.

Disaster Preparedness Kit

- Portable radio and extra batteries
- Plastic trash barrel with a lid
- Water buckets
- Stored feeds
- Non-nylon leads and halters
- Leg wraps
- Horse blanket or sheet
- Portable generators
- First aid items
- Tarps
- Flashlights
- Shovel
- Lime or bleach
- Fly spray
- Wire cutters
- Sharp knife
- Hoof pick



The California Department of Food and Agriculture is **NOT** the lead agency when it comes to natural disasters that involve animal evacuations. Please contact the lead agency, [Governor's Office of Emergency Services \(CalOES\)](#), during an animal emergency.

Animal Health and Food Safety Services Animal Health Branch

Headquarters - (916) 900-5002
Redding District - (530) 225-2140
Modesto District - (209) 491-9350
Tulare District - (559) 685-3500
Ontario District - (909) 947-4462

USDA-APHIS - (916) 854-3950 or (877) 741-3690

For more information on the Animal Health Branch's focus to protect California animal agriculture and preventing, detecting, responding to, and eradicating foreign animal diseases from our farms and our food chain, please visit the [CDFA Foreign And Domestic Animal Diseases webpage](#).