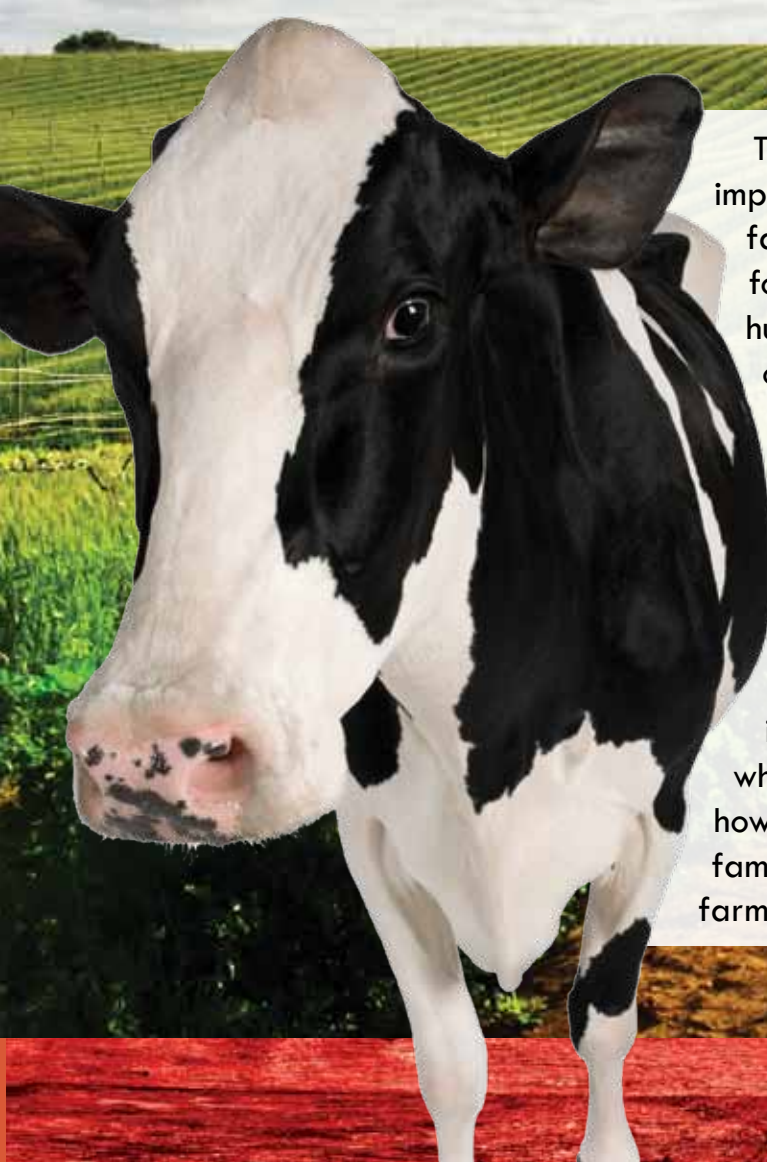


Farm Planning

FOR THE FUTURE: EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS ON FARMS

A black and white cow is shown in profile, facing left, in the foreground. The background is a vast green field with rows of crops stretching to the horizon under a blue sky with scattered white clouds.

The health and safety of your family and home is important when a disaster strikes; but so too is your farm. It is important to have an emergency plan for your farm, crops and livestock. Weather, like hurricanes, floods and tornados, is not the only kind of disaster that can affect your farm. Barn fires, chemical spills and gas line explosions can also hurt your farm at any time and in any area.

Every farm is different in what it is at risk of, what you need to prepare for and what resources are available to your farm to meet its needs during an emergency or disaster. The information in this sheet is intended to get farmers thinking about what their farms' needs may be during an emergency; how best to meet those needs relative to their farm and family; and general tips for emergency preparation for farms.



General things to consider for emergency preparation

- Make an emergency plan. Common things to think about include: what to do with livestock if you can or cannot evacuate; how to secure buildings, machinery, equipment and chemicals; how to store farm records, financial records, insurance policies and other important documentation.
- Post your emergency plan in generally used or common areas where it is easy to remember where it is. Make sure your family and employees know where it is.
- You may want to keep an extra copy in the house and another one in the tractor cab. It is suggested to have at least three copies in case you cannot get to one of them.
- You may want to include your family, employees, neighbors or anyone else who may be part of carrying out the plan if disaster strikes.
- Make sure to get rid of old plans when you update or make new plans. Otherwise, if emergency crews are using an old copy of the plan, valuable time may be wasted or your farm's current needs may not be met.
- Make an emergency phone list. You may want to include the names and numbers of neighbors, boarders, employees, the vet, poison control, your state vet, local animal shelters, feed suppliers, animal control, your county extension office, local agriculture school and local trailering companies.
- Do regular safety checks for all of your farm's utilities, buildings and facilities.
- Keep all of your insurance documents and other important papers and records in a water tight, portable container. You may need to take these with you if you have to evacuate.
- You may want to buy a generator if you have electrical equipment that has to keep running, like refrigeration units or fencing.
- Tie down or remove any objects that could be picked up by the wind and cause damage.
- If you use heat lamps or other heat sources, make sure the wiring is in good condition. Make sure the area around the heat source is free of anything that could catch fire, like hay and feeders.
- Make sure that heaters and areas around heaters are well ventilated. This reduces the chance of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Label chemicals, oil, medicine for animals and other hazardous materials. Keep them in a safe and dry place.
- Review and update your disaster plan often. Your plan may need changes as your farm changes.

General things to consider for emergency prep (cont.)

- Have a basic first aid kit in several different places around your farm. Cell phone, flashlight, portable radio and batteries are some things you may also want to keep with it.
- Keep and post information about hazardous and potentially hazardous materials you use on your farm. Many farms are home to pesticides, diesel fuel, gasoline, fuel oil, new oil, used oil, propane, oxygen and kerosene.
- Have a map that shows all access points to your farm.
- Cover all windows and glass doors with a sturdy material, like wood panels, before a storm with high winds or a hurricane hits.
- Clean up trash piles and move hazardous materials to places where contaminants from these materials cannot be washed into ponds, streams or onto your crops.
- Drain ponds or build levees around them to lessen the chance of flooding.
- Check stored water supplies often during the winter to make sure they have not frozen.

General things to think about for livestock

- If you are forced to evacuate and leave behind your livestock, post a sign(s) with the type of breed and number of head in your herd on it and the phone number where you can be reached. Some places to post this sign where people may most likely come across it include the gate to your property, gate/fencing of the pasture where you left the herd and on the barn or other livestock shelter.
- Leave extra food and water out for your animals.
- Every animal should have a durable and visible ID tag. Permanent markings, like branding, are best. Plastic neck bands or ear tags that can be written on with permanent marker are also good options. These can be kept in your emergency supply kit and used if needed.
- You may also want to photograph each animal and have registration papers to show documentation of your ownership in case you need to claim them.
- Have enough large containers to store a week's worth of water for your animals. Keep a current list of your animals. Include feeding instructions, vaccination records and proof of ownership.
- Have halters, cages and other restraint devices available around stalls, barns and pastures. You may have to move your animals very quickly.

General things to think about for livestock (cont.)

- Make sure to keep all vaccinations up-to-date. The stress of a disaster, coupled with changes in the environment, can lead to an increase in disease.
- Animal evacuation may not be possible for all of your animals. Choose ahead of time which animals are the most important to evacuate and have a list pre-made. You may want to consider sale value, breeding quality, stage of pregnancy, stage of production or sentimental preference.
- Think about whether it is better to shelter your animals or to keep them in pasture. In some cases, such as a hurricane, animals in an unsafe building may be more at risk than animals left in the open. Another example is flooding. Animals could drown in a barn because they would not be able to escape to higher ground. The decision to shelter animals or not should be based on the type of emergency, lay of your land and type of sheltering you have on your farm. Your decisions may vary based on the types of emergency you are most at risk for.



Resources

A comprehensive booklet and template for an emergency farm plan is available from the Michigan State University Extension at www.animalagteam.msu.edu/uploads/files/20/E2575.pdf. The booklet includes sections on agricultural chemicals, how to deal with livestock during an emergency, a sample farm map and information on transporting agricultural chemicals.

More generalized emergency planning information is available through the Federal Emergency Management Agency at www.ready.gov or call **304-558-5380**.



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