

Hurricane and Emergency Preparedness for Horse Owners

The time to prepare is well before you need to move out of the path of a hurricane. When a hurricane is threatening your area, the first order of priority is to save human lives. With proper preparation and planning we can save our horses' lives.

1. **Decisions** – Well in advance of any storm or other natural disaster, decide how bad things will have to be before you evacuate your horses. For example, in the case of a hurricane, will you evacuate if it is a category 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5. Decide on two possible evacuation shelters in opposite directions so that, depending on the direction of the storm or changes in its path, you will already have chosen a safe place. For example: one to the west and one to the east. Once you make your choices, make sure you know what the shelters require.
2. **Documents** - You will need a current negative Coggins on each horse you plan to move to a safer location. (If you plan to take your horse to another state for shelter, you may be required to have a recent health certificate. Check with the state in which you are planning to seek shelter.) You should also have a copy of each horse's medical history including your veterinarian's contact information, and a signed permission for emergency treatment that goes with the horse. You can set the maximum you are willing to pay without personal notification but, if you don't sign an approval for emergency treatment it could cost you your horse.
3. **Medications** – If your horse requires special medications or must be sedated for hauling, have these supplies on hand and send them with the horse along with instructions.
4. **Identification** - Each horse must have either a micro-chip for identification, a tattoo, brand or ID bands that can be affixed to the horse. Of all of these the best means of identifying a specific horse and tracking the owner is the micro-chip. It is a low cost and highly effective means of identification. While all of these are required by law, the fact is that after a natural disaster, it will take time for owners to be determined and contacted. Therefore in addition to the micro-chip, tattoo or brand use latex spray paint or clippers to paint or clip your phone number on the horse's back or use an indelible ink (permanent) marker to write on a wide ribbon your horse's description, your name and contact information, or use a light weight luggage tag or business card size paper that you laminate with this information and braid them into each horse's **mane and tail**. If you are required to evacuate, use the phone number of a relative or close friend who will know how to reach you and who is aware of what you will want done concerning emergency medical treatment of your horses. This person should live in an area not effected by the storm.
5. **Emergency Boarding** - Make arrangements with boarding facilities at points as far north and east or west of the storm as possible. Make sure that you ***notify the facility if your horse is a stud or a mare in heat***
6. **Tack** – All horses should be shipped with their own halter and lead ropes. (Halters can carry disease so make certain that the halter is clean and that it was not used on a sick animal.) put the horse's name on the halter and, if possible, include your contact information. Do not saddle horses prior to shipping. Do not halter horses that are left out in the field.

7. **Trailer** – At the beginning of hurricane season and frequently during the hurricane season, check your trailer to make certain that it is safe to transport horses. Check the floor, the tires, the brakes and the lights to make certain they are in working order. ***Plan to move your horses while the storm is at least 4 days away.*** Once the governor calls for mandatory evacuation, no commercial vehicles or horse trailers are allowed on evacuation routes.
8. **Truck** – Check to make sure your truck is ready to pull the trailer. Check the hitch to make sure it is secure and in proper working order. Make sure that you have a full tank of gas. **DO NOT** carry full gas cans in your horse trailer.
9. **Commercial Haulers** - If you plan to use a commercial hauler, you must arrange to have them pick the horse up well in advance of mandatory evacuation. Once the governor calls for mandatory evacuation, no commercial vehicles or horse trailers are allowed on evacuation routes.
10. **Inter-state transportation** – In Louisiana, if you move your horse via I-55, you should not try to house your horse in Mississippi. They have horses of their own that they are trying to provide safer shelter for. Once you enter Mississippi, you will have to go north to I-20 in Jackson, then head west back into Louisiana to find temporary shelter for your horse or show proof that you are transporting your horse to Tennessee, Arkansas or other states farther north. A board agreement or fax from a boarding facility in another state may be required.
11. **Location** – Ideally you should send your horse as far from the shore line and major wind impact as possible. This will vary state to state and city to city. Check with the proper authorities in your area to make sure. Decide on two possible evacuation shelters in opposite directions so that depending on the direction of the storm, or changes in its path, you will already have chosen a safe place. For example: one to the west and one to the east. Once you make your choices, make sure you know what the shelters require.
12. **Feed** - Pack enough feed and hay to last each horse you are shipping at least one week and send it with them.
13. **Prioritize** - If you have a trailer that does not have the capacity to transport all of your horses, decide NOW which horses you are going to transport first. Plan so that you have plenty of time to make necessary round trips long before mandatory evacuations are ordered.
14. **Emergency Fencing** - Purchase several rolls of orange plastic wind/construction fencing and store them in a safe place. If your horses are used to being fenced, this fencing will contain them until any damaged fencing can be repaired. It can be put in place with a staple gun and trees or wooden fence posts.
15. **Barn/Stable Preparation** – store all loose items, jump standards, jump cups, cross rails, arena letters, bleachers, furniture etc. inside the barn or storage area so that these items do not become dangerous projectiles in high winds. Secure any loose roofing materials. Secure all gates. Clear items not permanently and securely attached from all aisle ways and barn walls and store them in a safe places. **DO NOT STAY IN THE BARN WITH YOUR HORSES DURING THE STORM.**

16. **Signs** – Make signs with a full 4' X 8' sheet of wood or a king size flat sheet – on using large letters and dark paint spray paint "HAVE ANIMALS, NEED HELP." On the other side of paint, "HAVE ANIMALS, AM OK FOR NOW." Store the signs in a safe place until after the storm.
17. **Horses that remain in place** – If you cannot move your horses and are in an area prone to flooding, or severe wind damage, **Hurricane Katrina demonstrated that horses left outside where they have the room and ability to move to higher ground are most likely to survive with minimal injury. The horses that died and were seriously injured were those that were left locked inside a barn or other structure.** If you leave your horses in a covered area but DO NOT close the doors or gates. If water begins to rise and the horses are trapped in their stalls, they will drown. They must be able to get out and move to higher ground. Make sure that the horses have access to plenty of safe water and food as it may take up to a week or more for you to get back to them. If you leave horses outside, move them to a location free of powerlines and other potentially hazardous conditions. **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR HORSE OUTSIDE WITH A HALTER ON.** The halter can get tangled in debris or downed trees and cause serious injury or death.
18. **Emergency supplies** – You should have a supply of topical antiseptics, gauze pads, vet wrap etc. You should also have access to feed and hay in the event that the storm wipes out your barn and feed room. Wrap hay securely in water proof tarps or plastic. Store feed in tightly sealed water tight containers. Move wrapped hay and containers of feed to the highest, driest spot possible. **Do not use feed or hay that has been in flood waters.** Fill clean plastic garbage cans with water and cover tightly and store in a safe place. It may be several days after the storm before water is available and safe. To prevent colic, if your horse has been injured or is stressed by the storm, do not feed grain - good clean, mold free hay is best until the horse is calm.
19. **Emergency Barn Kit** – put together a chain saw and fuel, hammers, hand saw, nails, screws, fencing materials and fire ant killer. Place this kit in a secure area before the storm hits.
20. **Secure** - all vehicles, trailers and maintenance equipment with camper tie downs.
21. **Fire Prevention** - Turn off circuit breakers to the barn before leaving. A power surge could cause sparks and fire.
22. **Protect yourself** –If mandatory evacuations are posted for your area and you cannot transport your horse to safer ground **DO NOT STAY BEHIND** with your horses. Do the best you can for the animals and get out safely. **DO NOT STAY IN THE BARN WITH YOUR HORSES.**
23. **Follow up** - If your horse has been transported to an emergency boarding facility, call and verify that your horse was received and make sure you have all of their contact information.
24. **Further Information** –When a hurricane is threatening, contact your local office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, Civil Defense or state veterinarian's office to find out more information about options for livestock in your area.

AFTER THE STORM IS OVER

1. **Going Outside** - Be very careful live electric wires could be all around you. Locate your animals and tend to any minor wounds. Check fencing and put up emergency fencing where needed. Carefully try to clean debris from the barn, and clear the driveway out to the road.
2. **Check stalls** to make sure that they are clear of debris, water and snakes before putting your horses back in them. **DO NOT** put your hands into places that you cannot see into **SNAKES CAN BE HIDING IN THEM.**
3. **Signs** - Place one of the signs at the edge of your driveway, at the roadside, with the appropriate writing facing the road. Place the other sign in a clear area that is visible from the air so that aircraft flying overhead will be able to see it to determine if you need help. If you do not have a severely injured animal, put the OK sign up. In your need it, help will get to you as soon as possible.
4. **Fire ants and snakes**- Ants and snakes will look for the driest place to nest and will move from wet to high ground when their nests flood. Check your barn/stall walls and feed/hay areas. Ants will also seek refuge from wet ground on fence rails and tree branches, so take care when clearing debris after a storm. Do not put your hands or feet in recesses you cannot see. Snakes will also hide between hay bales and banked shavings.
5. **Fencing**- Check your entire fence line for damage and either repair it or put up emergency orange plastic construction fencing to keep your horses from getting onto roads or other potentially dangerous situations.
6. **Feed** - Do not use feed or hay that is wet or has been in flood waters. If your horse is stressed or injured, do not feed grain. Give him lots of dry, mold free hay until the horse is treated or calmed. Feeding grain to a horse under stress can cause colic.
7. **Found Horses** – If you find a horse in your pasture or yard that does not belong to you, carefully approach the animal. Check for injuries at a safe distance. If the horse will allow you to approach, do so with caution. Check for injuries, identification and contact information. As you will have no way of knowing if the strange horse has any diseases or behavior traits that can be a threat to your horses, it is important to keep him away from your horses. Place the horse in a separate pasture, using emergency plastic fencing if necessary to keep the horse a safe distance from yours. Contact the owner as soon as possible. If there is no identification on the horse, contact your veterinarian to see if he can determine and read the micro-chip. If the horse has a brand, contact the Louisiana Dept of Agriculture and Forestry Brand Commission – 800-558-9741. If the horse has a tattoo on his lower lip, contact the Jockey Club Registry - (859) 224-2700. Make sure the horse has plenty of clean water and clean hay until the owner can be found and the horse taken home or other arrangements can be made.
8. **Neighbors** - Once your horses are secure and taken care of, check on your neighbors.