

Planning for Equine Evacuations

Preparing for equine evacuations can be crucial to the survival of horses.

If you wait until the last minute, you're placing yourself and your horse in harm's way. When announcements are made to evacuate, take the threat seriously. You need to make the decision to leave as soon as you can.

Make sure equine trailers are road-worthy before hurricane season begins or identify someone with reliable trucks and trailers who can transport horses.

Ensure that your horses are comfortable with loading. Working with your horses ahead of time is particularly important if a neighbor or friend will be transporting your horse because ill-behaved horses can waste valuable evacuation time or refusal of transport.

Fill up on gas or diesel before entering traffic. Evacuation traffic is often slow and crowded, creating a dangerous situation for trailered horses. Animals might overheat or become dehydrated should you run out of fuel.

Have a plan as to where you might move your horse(s). Be familiar with locations of farms willing to accommodate your horse(s).

Create an equine evacuation "kit":

- ID Documents in a waterproof re-sealable bag; including photos from all sides, microchip, tattoo, registration papers. A record of each animal's age, sex, breed and color. A brief and well documented health history, vaccination history, an up-to-date Coggins test is necessary, particularly if crossing state lines, a list of behavior peculiarities (if applicable). Place duplicates in a travel trailer.
- A first aid kit
- Enough food and adequate, safe water supplies for about four days
- Medications for chronic or pre-existing illnesses.
- Plastic trash barrel with lid, a water bucket
- Leg wraps
- Fire-resistant non nylon leads and halters
- Cotton rope
- A portable radio and a flashlight with extra batteries, a backup generator
- Sharp knife, wire cutters, tarpaulins, lime and bleach.
- Have maps of roads handy and plans for alternate routes in case of road closures

Equine Contact Information Sites:

CThorseCouncil.org

Google maps for CT Horse Farms

Large Animal Sheltering in Place

If you cannot evacuate your horse, or are forced to leave part of your herd behind, there are also some precautions that can help you reunite with your horse. Keeping photographs can help, but also attaching identification information to the horse's body can be useful.

"Braiding information wrapped in plastic to horses manes and tails can help. Livestock paint works well to put identification information on the body, and it's waterproof. Or even taking a pair of clippers and shaving your contact information into the animal's hair can help you reunite with your horse when you return."

If you must evacuate and leave your livestock, look at your property:

- Identify the best place for your animals in each type of disaster.
- Leave enough water for the length of time you expect to be gone, as automatic watering systems will fail if power is lost. Test-run backup generators and make sure they are full of fuel.
- Make sure each animal and halter is permanently identified. If a disaster strikes before you can identify your animals by tattoo, microchip, brand or tag, paint or etch hooves, use neckbands or paint your telephone number on the side of the animal before you move.
- If you are in a flood zone, perhaps you can incorporate an area high enough and accessible enough for the large animals to wait out the storm.
- Be sure to leave them a two-week supply of feed and water - some large animals survived the storm surge only to die of thirst while surrounded by salt water in 2005 hurricanes.
- Take small animals with you.
- Evacuate early enough so that you do not have to leave them behind.
- Never leave large animals locked in a barn or small animals locked in a home when fire or flood is approaching. If you cannot take them with you, at least give them a chance at survival rather than leaving them trapped.
- Always close the doors; animals will run back into a building that is familiar but not necessarily safe.
- If circumstances dictate that you leave animals in a building, **spray paint** a message to rescuers giving the number of animals and what species are confined inside.
- Never believe that someone will come to your premises and save your animals. Your friends cannot get past the road block, your neighbors have their own animals to save as well. There is not time for our crews to circulate through every neighborhood. If you can get your own animals to the nearest roadblock, even if you walk them out, someone can usually meet you there with transport to shelter. The more animals in your care, the further ahead you should plan to evacuate them.

- Listen to the local radio station for emergency broadcasts. We may have the radio repeat instructions regarding evacuation sites, locations of roadblocks, and a phone number to call for help. You can also monitor the local county website and local TV stations. In some areas, you can sign up for a service that will send a text message to your cell phone during emergencies.