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## Hurricane Preparedness for Horses

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Our horses depend on us for their safety in the event of a hurricane or other disaster. Have you made a plan to reduce risk to your animal? If not, NOW is the time! The following steps can improve your horse's chances of riding out the storm with only minimal injuries:

1. Assess the storm-worthiness of your stable or barn. I encourage you to have a licensed general contractor inspect the premises and evaluate the sturdiness and wind resistance of your roof, walls, window and door coverings, and how well your barn is tied into its foundation. Hopefully, you will get an A+ in all areas. If not, there may be some minor improvements you can make with a little elbow grease and little expense to improve the sturdiness of the structure--or you may need to make some major improvements to insure the safety of your animals. It is important to know what your situation is, because your barn or "home base" is the foundation of the individualized disaster plan for your horse.

2. After the stable or barn has been assessed, you will be in a position to create your personal hurricane plan for you and your horse. Prepare in advance a plan of action for each storm level. For example:

- a. List all details that will help your animal safely ride out the storm.
- b. Don't forget to actually write down your plan.
- c. Provide copies of the plan to those individuals who will be helping you implement it.
- d. Post the plan in a prominent place in the barn.
- e. Develop a check list to insure that everything is done.
- f. Decide when or if it will be time to evacuate. Remember, evacuation should be the choice of last resort.
- g. Assign duties to individuals in order to prepare for evacuation.

3. Now is the time to police property where horses will be kept. All debris needs to be removed before storm watches or warnings are posted. Remember, tree limbs, old lumber, fencing, and other "junk" can become wind-driven missiles. Remove debris now while there is plenty of time. Since wind can carry debris long distances, it is suggested that you work jointly with neighbors to remove as much debris as possible from all surrounding property.

4. If you are not satisfied with the sturdiness and safety of the structure where you will be housing your horse during a storm, now is the time to determine where you would like to shelter your animal. In a Class I or II storm the horses will be safer in a strong, secure barn or stable.

In a Class III or IV storm, your horses may be safest outside if:

- a. They have room to move, (at least  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre per animal).
- b. The fences are strong and will not collect debris that will push them over.
- c. There are no overhead power lines that can that can come down into the pasture.

5. If your barn is not strong and you lack appropriate pasturage, you should probably consider making arrangements to move your horses to a facility that is more secure. If this means evacuating out of the general area, you need to make plans early (before there is any danger). Start early to avoid being stranded on the road. PLANNING IS THE KEY HERE—you need to decide where you are going, and you should make your arrangements/reservations with your destination, know how long it should take you to reach your destination, and make allowances for traveling slowly due to congestion. Remember we have limited roads out of South Florida! Long distance evacuation should be a carefully considered decision as it requires extensive planning and organization prior to "hitting the road".

6. Plan to have sufficient hay, feed, and water on hand for your horses for at least a week. Plan to have 15 to 20 gallons of water per horse per day. Remember, if the electricity is off, your pump will probably not work. If the water is questionable, you can purify it with 8 drops of chlorine bleach per gallon, or 12 drops if the water is murky. Use "low-grade" hay, and DON'T leave the horses with grain. This will reduce the likelihood that they will founder. You must make sure you have an adequate water source (two or three

buckets will not suffice if it is several days before you are able to get back) since you don't know for sure when you will be able to return to the barn. If possible, invest in a couple of water troughs that, when filled with water, will be too heavy to tip over, unless we get a direct hurricane hit.

7. Store feed and water in waterproof containers. Hay bales should be covered with tarps and off the ground at least two feet to protect them from possible flooding.

8. Identify your horse well. We recommend that you have at least three forms of identification on your horse:

- a. Spray paint your telephone number on the side of the horse in a contrasting color.
- b. Put your name, address, phone number, and the number of an out of state contact in a water proof baggie or other container, and securely tape it to the horse's halter.
- c. Place the horse's identification information on a waterproof luggage tag and braid it into the mane or tail. If your horse is tattooed or has an electronic chip, be sure the ownership information with the appropriate registry is up-to-date.

9. Have a supply of commonly used medications and wound treatment supplies on hand in case it is necessary to perform basic first aid. You will find a list of recommended supplies on the Broward County Extension website [www.broward.org/extension](http://www.broward.org/extension) (then go to the Large Animal page).

10. As you leave the barn is to look around for loose items that need to be properly stored, and be sure to turn off the electricity at the main switch.

The Broward County Large Animal Disaster Committee has a video tape available on strengthening your barn and developing a hurricane plan for your horse. If you would like to receive a copy, contact Mary Peters, Extension Agent, at [mpeters@broward.org](mailto:mpeters@broward.org), or call her at 954-370-3725 ext. 224. The tape is free for Broward County residents, and available for a minimal cost to those in other counties.

By: Mary Peters

In Brevard County, if you need additional information contact Renee' L. Gore 4-H Agent or Joe Walter Livestock Agent 321-952-4536 or 321-633-1702