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## **Preparing Livestock for Hurricane Season**

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Hurricane season is from June 1 thru December 1<sup>st</sup> each year. Many Manatee County residences spend late spring preparing their hurricane kit just in case we may be a target of Mother Nature. Part of everyone's hurricane preparedness should include plans to protect your livestock in case of a hurricane.

When preparing livestock for the upcoming hurricane season you should check their records to ensure that they are current on all vaccinations. Just as humans need to maintain health records, animals should also have health records. All livestock should have a permanent form of identification which is also recorded in a safe location to prove they are your animals. Livestock owners should also prepare to have plenty of feed, hay and water on hand prior to the storm making landfall. Many of these resources may not be available following the storm. Basic veterinary supplies such as bandages, topical ointments, etc should be on hand along with restraint equipment such as a halter and rope for veterinary services, if required. For possible fence mending and repair, make sure to have extra fencing equipment and supplies available. Just before the storm makes landfall, turn off the power and water in the barn area. Not to the fences. This will keep animals in or around the barn from being electrocuted.

Owners should also plan to prepare their barn, pastures and out-buildings for the hurricane season. Any boards, wire, posts, or other loose debris should be securely stored to reduce chance of injury to livestock from flying objects. Barns and out-buildings should be checked for loose metal and boards and securely repaired or fixed prior to the storm. In case of evacuation, livestock trailers should be properly maintained and in working order.

The best way to ensure that your livestock remains safe is to evacuate them well in advance of the storm making landfall. When evacuating livestock, make sure they have plenty of feed, hay and water for the duration of their evacuation. If evacuation of livestock is not feasible, owners should turn the livestock loose into larger pastures or pen with solid shelter or large trees on higher ground. This is preferred to keeping livestock in a barn or small pen where they cannot avoid flying or falling debris. Livestock will instinctively go to a protected area of the pasture to remain out of harm's way. Smaller livestock should be brought indoors for protection. Check to see that feed and hay on hand is securely stored in a dry and water proof space.

Do not check on livestock during the storm. They can take care of themselves. Wait until after the storm to check on your livestock. This is for your own safety as well as theirs. Livestock is accustomed to bad weather; they may be stressed due to the weather

conditions. Younger animals are more susceptible to stress than the older animals. Provide them with a clean, dry area to stand, if available. Administering electrolytes or vitamins may assist the animals in overcoming their stress and returning them to normal. However, you need to be prepared to administer basic veterinary care when checking on livestock following the storm. If you encounter more than basic cuts or scratches, you need to contact your veterinarian for assistance. Be prepared for new born livestock during a storm. Bad weather may cause pregnant females to give birth if they are near term.

Just as you would prepare your family and home for the hurricane season you should prepare your livestock, barns and out-buildings.