



Horses and Hurricanes

The Educated Horseman: Management Series



The Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1 through Nov. 30 each year. Even when it's not hurricane season or when the season isn't predicted to be as bad, it's still a good idea to make your plans early and to work on preparing your horses for potential storms.

Planning is the key to keeping your horses safe. Ensure your horse is up to date on all vaccines. Create a "plan" with neighbors and surrounding farm owners. Identify available resources in the surrounding areas. This includes an evacuation route, stabling locations, feed availability, emergency kits and ensuring your horses are trained to load into a trailer if needed.

If your plans include evacuation, leave early enough to avoid traffic jams and the accompanying delays. Also keep in mind that management practices may change during an evacuation, so monitor your horses closely for dehydration and signs of colic or intestinal distress.

The destruction each hurricane can cause is unpredictable. While there is no way to know if you will be affected by a hurricane, creating a plan will prepare you to handle any situation that occurs.



If you plan to weather the storm at home, these suggestions may help to keep you and your horse safe:

- Have a minimum of a two-week supply of hay/feed stored in watertight containers. Place those supplies in the highest and driest area possible.
- You will need a minimum of 10 gallons of water per horse per day. Fill as many clean plastic barrels with water as you can, secure the tops and store them in a safe place near your animals.
- Prepare an emergency barn kit that includes a light source, batteries, rope, chain saw, fuel, hammers, saw, nails, screws, spray paint and fencing materials. Keep this kit in a secure place before the storm.
- Notify neighbors and family where you will be during the storm.
- Collect identifying records for each animal, including a recent photo of each horse with a family member in the photo, medical documents, special needs, tattoos, microchips, brands, scars, any other permanent identification/markings, owner information and your veterinarian's contact information. Place this in a secure location that you can reach after the hurricane. You may even consider sending a copy of these documents to a friend out of the hurricane's potential reach, so the records could be retrieved later, if needed
- Attach identification to all horses (fetlock ID tags, tags on halters, spray paint phone numbers on the animal or tie waterproof bag containing ownership information in the mane).
- Turn off circuit breakers to the barn or area where horses will be kept (since a power surge could cause sparks or a fire).
- Provide hay/water for each horse during a storm.
- Remove any hazards from the area where horses will be kept.
- If horses are kept outside, allow them access to higher ground.

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References

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Disaster Planning Tips for Pets Livestock and Wildlife (HSUS): <http://www.ohsep.louisiana.gov/factsheets/planningtipspet-slivestockwildlife.htm>
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