

NEWS & FEATURES

Disaster planning for horse owners.

Horse owner preparedness is a 24/7, year-round requirement in California. The approach of National Preparedness Month in September is a good reminder to double check readiness for coping with wildfires, floods, mudslides and whatever else Mother Nature may throw our way.

Toward that end, here's a good guide from the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, one of several organizations to provide critical support during California's recent disasters.



Ready Your Horses

- Microchip your horse as a permanent form of identification—or if that's not an option, identify your horse in some other way such as a tattoo. In an emergency, you can place an ID clip or braid a luggage tag in his mane or tail or paint your phone number on his side with non-toxic paint.

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Written by CRM

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- Get horses accustomed to wearing a halter.
- Practicing loading onto a trailer under calm conditions so horses are on autopilot during an emergency.
- Train the horse to be well-socialized and accustomed to being handled by strangers.
- Consider asking off-duty fire fighters to interact with the horse in their turnout gear to desensitize horses to the look and smell of the gear.

Prevent On-Site Fires

- Keep a clean and tidy stable and pasture, removing items from around the barn's walkways, entrances and exits.
- Regularly maintain and inspect barn floors and septic tanks.
- Institute a no-smoking policy around the barn.
- Avoid using appliances, even seemingly harmless ones like box fans, heaters and power tools, in the barn.

Test Your Trailer

- Regularly inspect trailer and its tire pressure, brake battery, safety chains or cables.
- Make sure your trailer has room for all your equines, including a place to tether them inside.

Create an Emergency Kit

- Make a portable emergency kit that includes the following:
- Tack checklist
- Paperwork proving your ownership of your horse (branding papers, microchip registration, photos
- Vet records, including a current Coggins test if you have it
- Equine first aid kit that includes:
- 7-10-day supply of feed and water

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- Clean buckets
- Record of each horse's diet
- Record and two-week's supply of each horse's medication, including drug name, dose and frequency along with veterinarian and pharmacy contact information for refills
- Antibiotic ointment (for wounds)
- Antibiotic eye ointment
- Cotton bandage rolls
- Bandage scissors
- Bandage tape
- Elastic bandage rolls
- Gauze pads and rolls
- Non-adherent bandage pads
- Cotton-tipped swabs
- Betadine® (povidone-iodine) or Nolvasan® (chlorhexidine), scrub and solution
- Isopropyl alcohol/alcohol prep pads
- Eye rinse (sterile)
- Heavy leather gloves
- Twitch
- Hoof pick
- Knife (sharp, all-purpose)
- Latex gloves or nonallergenic gloves
- Saline solution (for rinsing wounds)
- Sterile lubricant (water-based)
- Thermometer (digital/stethoscope)
- Tourniquets
- Tweezers/hemostat

Locate a Temporary Caregiver

- Contact your veterinarian for a list of preferred boarding facilities.
- Ask friends and relatives outside your immediate area if they would be willing to take in your horse.

Plan Your Evacuation Route

- Drive your route so you are comfortable knowing where to go.

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- Have at least two routes to your evacuation site in case of road closures.
- Begin your transport as soon as authorities issue an evacuation of your area, if not before.

Collaborate With Neighbors

- Set up a phone tree/buddy system with other nearby horse owners and local farms.
- Team up with other horse owners to pool your resources, including sharing trailer space and hay.
- Share your evacuation plans with your neighbors.

Article provided by the ASPCA. For more information, visit www.aspca.org.