

# Disaster Relief: *Maintaining Livestock Health after a Flood*



## Disease Control

After a flood, there may be danger of infectious diseases in livestock, but, unless serious outbreaks of infection have occurred recently, there is no need to be alarmed. Observe these precautions:

- Where large numbers of animals assemble, watch for any sign of infectious diseases, such as pneumonia, foot rot, or leptospirosis.
  - These diseases are more likely to occur where cattle are crowded on wet ground and where there are lots of horn flies and house flies.
  - If possible, an experienced livestock owner under the supervision of a veterinarian should handle and feed the animals.
- Promptly report any sign of disease to the nearest veterinarian or county Extension office.
- Contact a veterinarian about vaccinating animals for immunity from flood-related diseases, such as anthrax, leptospirosis, blackleg, and swine erysipelas.

## Feed and Water

- Provide clean, uncontaminated water.
- Inspect feeds, such as corn, wheat, and hay.
  - Damaged grains and moldy hay may cause digestive disturbances.
  - Horses, sheep, poultry, swine, and cattle are affected most severely (in that order) by damaged feed.
  - Do not force livestock to eat silage that has been flooded, even though it may not look any different.
  - Do not use any feed or forage that may have been contaminated by chemicals or pesticides.

## Pastureland

- Standing water may have ruined some pastures.
  - Lack of adequate forage could force animals to eat poisonous plants that are abundant in some parts of the country.
  - Remove fallen wild cherry limbs from pastures to prevent livestock poisoning.
- Before restocking flooded pastures, remove debris, especially along fence lines and in corners. Livestock could be injured from pieces of barbed wire, sharp metal, and trash.

## Protect Dairy Cows

- Try to milk at regular times. It is better to lose the milk from one milking than to stress high-producing cows.
- If you must use a neighbor's milking parlor, try to keep the two herds separate.
- If feed supplies are limited, give the largest portion of available feed to the highest-producing cows and those recently fresh. This may be a good time to cull less productive animals from the herd.
- Clean and sanitize the milking parlor and dairy barn, milking equipment, and feed-handling equipment before returning to normal use.
- Watch for signs of mastitis, which is likely to flare up as cows are stressed because of changes in milking procedures, equipment, and/or milking schedules.

## Sanitation

- Clean out hog houses, barns, and chicken houses.
  - Spray buildings with a good disinfectant before animals occupy them again.
  - Air buildings thoroughly before they are dried out.
- Remove debris from dairy barns.

- Scrub and disinfect walls, ceilings, floors, stanchions, and other equipment.
- Scrub the milk house and equipment with detergent and hot water.
- Sanitize equipment, walls, ceilings, and floors with dairy sanitizing products.
- Dispose of animal carcasses promptly. If there is no rendering company operating nearby, burn or bury carcasses deeply in a place approved by your local soil conservation office.

## Insects

Mosquitoes and other pests may be abundant after a flood. They not only annoy animals, but some species carry disease. Spray animals with an insect repellent as recommended by your county Extension office.

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