



## Livestock Disaster Preparedness Project – BARN FIRES

It only takes 3 to 4 minutes for a barn to be filled with smoke and only 6 minutes for it to be completely engulfed. Combined with the facts that barn fires often start at night, are not immediately detected and the response time of the fire department is longer due to distance to farms, barn fires normally will result in total loss of structure.

Dependent on number of animals and type of production, loss of animal life is often high. Animals kept in individual stalls are challenging and time consuming to remove from the facility (i.e. pigs, horses). Other animals are impossible to get out of housing style they utilize (i.e. layers).

### Entities Impacted

- All animals in impact area.
- Catastrophic impact on animal health and welfare may include pain and suffering from burns and smoke inhalation, loss of housing/containment and access to feed and water.

### Response and Recovery

- Call 911. Provide dispatch with relevant information, such as type of animal involved and number of animals.
- Upon arrival of first responders provide them with information including how many animals are in the barn, other hazards, such as gas or diesel tanks, stored fertilizers, hay or dangerous animals. They will also need to know where the closest water source is, including a pond or dug out.
- If there is a chance of the structure fire spreading to a nearby field, they may request you farmer begin plowing a dirt fire barrier around the barn area, without getting too close to the barn.
- **AT NO TIME SHOULD A FIRE FIGHTER OR ANYONE ELSE PUT THEIR OWN PERSONAL SAFETY IN JEOPARDY TO SAVE AN ANIMAL FROM A BARN FIRE.**
- If a barn has exterior stall doors, whenever possible use these for evacuating animals instead of going inside the barn.
- Once barn roof is on fire, animals should only be accessed from outer walls. This can be done by using existing doors or possibly cutting a large hole in the side of the barn. **DO NOT GO INSIDE THE BARN - THE ROOF MAY COLLAPSE!**
- Animals become quickly frightened and disoriented in a fire. They will not run out of the barn on their own. Rescuers need to use extreme caution and judgement when attempting to vacate a burning barn. You must never put your own life in danger for the animals.
- If there is a series of connected barns or other barns in close proximity, it may be more effective and safer to evacuate the animals in those barns versus the barn that is on fire.

- The animals closest to the doors should be the first ones evacuated as they are the easiest to access.
- It takes at least 1 minute per horse to catch, halter and lead a minimum of 100 feet. A horse will be easier to move if it is blindfolded. Using a towel under a halter works very well if the horse is halter broke and not panicking.
- Pig barn fires are the most difficult to deal with. Due to the design of the barns, the high number of pigs in the barn and the difficulty moving pigs, these barns are almost impossible to evacuate. Pigs in confinement are especially afraid of light, which makes them difficult to move out of a barn into the sunlight or bright lights of a truck.
- Livestock will run back into a burning barn. When removing animals from a barn they should be taken clear of the incident scene. Preferably to corrals or trailers where they can be locked up and kept out of harm's way.
- If there is a chance any of the animals have embers under their hair, they must be hosed off. Embers can smolder under their hair for several hours leading to burns. Hose all animals off as they are removed from the structure.
- In the case of a poultry barn fires, the birds are almost impossible to evacuate.
- Pigs, poultry and dairy cows from a heated barn must be protected from the cold if they are evacuated in the winter.
- The leading cause of death in barn fires is smoke inhalation. Horses can experience a delayed reaction to smoke inhalation. For this reason, all horses involved in a barn fire should be directed to veterinary care, even if they look healthy.
- An evacuation location for surviving animals will need to be determined and temporary housing established for all animals involved in the fire as they will be unable to be housed in the facility that was lost. Rarely do producers have empty barns or enough space in remaining facilities to house the animals on their own farm.
- Feed sources may be destroyed by fire. This can include hay, grain and pasture. Emergency sources may need to be identified and provided.
- Dead stock disposal method and means need to be identified if mass animal casualty. Dead stock to be removed to designated disposal site or temporary holding area.