



## Livestock Disaster Preparedness Project – GRASS FIRES

Grass land or prairie fires are very common in Alberta. These fires can happen year-round and are often fueled by drought conditions and high winds. Common causes of grass fires are burn barrels, tractors and cigarette butts. These fires can move very quickly across open lands and farms and ranches are often the most vulnerable facilities.

### Entities Impacted

- All animals in impact area.
- Moderate to catastrophic Impact on animal health and welfare may include pain and suffering, loss of housing/containment and access to feed and water.

### Response

- Grass fires normally happen with no warning and will travel very quickly due to high winds. In many instances, there is no time for evacuation of livestock.
- If there is time to issue evacuation alert to producers in the fire path, assistance will most likely be needed for transport and loading due to the time restraints. Producers will most likely be able to transport one trailer load of animals, unable to return for the balance of the animals.
- Municipality will provide safest route out and notify evacuees of any closed roads.
- Open gates or cut fences to allow animals to escape if necessary but only do so if safe and not onto a road. If able to so, spray some indication of ownership on animals such as horses. This will allow for easier identification when animals are captured.
- Remove nylon halters or blankets from horses, if possible, as they will melt to the animal if the animal is near the fire.
- Livestock do not begin to fear fire until it comes within their sensory range. Once smoke and heat enter this sensory range it can invoke varying reactions from nervousness, to panic, to aggressive and resistive escape attempts.
- Horses, llamas and alpacas in particular will panic at approaching fire. Their instinct will be to flee. They are often not easily handled or managed. This elevated fear level can last for several days after the fire.
- Animals are often injured fleeing from the fire and from the first responders.
- If animals are burned or exposed to excessive smoke, veterinary care will be required. Veterinarian response team will need to be dispatched to site of fire, evacuation location or animals transported to veterinary clinic.
- If a grass fire destroys barn and fencing, temporary housing may be necessary. Work with Wheatland County on location for temporary housing.
- 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 method and means need to be identified if mass animal casualty.
- Dead stock to be removed to designated disposal site or temporary holding area as identified by Wheatland County.
- Loose animals will be rounded up and either returned to owner, if known, or taken to evacuation / temporary holding facility. Check with county on location of any loose animals.