



Livestock Disaster Preparedness Project – THUNDERSTORM / LIGHTNING STRIKES

Thunderstorms are a very common weather event in Alberta. These storms are often accompanied by lightning strikes, heavy rains, strong winds and hail. Livestock are killed by lightning strikes every year and it is not uncommon for multiple animals huddled together to be killed by one strike. The high winds that may accompany the storm can also impact livestock in the vicinity.

Thunderstorms can be extremely dangerous when they occur during an outdoor livestock event (i.e 4-H show, jumping event, rodeo). Animals will react and may act up or try to flee during a storm injuring handlers and spectators.

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, risk of injury, loss of feed and water sources.

Response and Recovery

- Livestock sense weather changes and it does impact their behaviour. Be aware animal behaviour may change before, during and even after a storm.
- Be alert at all times of loose livestock. These animals will be very frightened and may charge or attack first responders or other people in the area. Utilize low stress, safe livestock handling practices.
- Do not enter damaged buildings until first responders arrive.
- Assess building structures. Survey damage to barns and other structures; assess the stability and safety. Be on the lookout not just for building damage, but also frightened animals.
- Examine animals closely. Common injuries may include impalements and lacerations from flying debris or burns from lightning strikes. Request veterinary care if required.
- Animals that require euthanasia must be euthanized as soon as can safely be done. Animals cannot be transported for euthanasia but must be euthanized where they are located.
- Ensure access to euthanasia tools and personnel to euthanize animals are available within the impact area and at temporary housing area.
- If determined that temporary housing is required, work with the county on location.
- Dead stock will need to be disposed of as soon as possible to prevent disease spread, public health and environmental issues. Producers may need assistance if animals exceed the 2,500 kg limitations or they do not have access to a burial site.
- Dead stock to be removed to designated disposal site or temporary holding area designated by county.
- Temporary housing may need to be identified if structural damage prevents animals from being housed in their existing facilities.