

Emergency Preparedness on the Farm

By Beth Crandall

Let's talk about how to prepare your farm for natural disasters such as drought, fires, and floods. With the fires in California and hurricanes in Florida, we should all be prepared for an emergency to take place. Thankfully in Utah, we don't have to deal with tornadoes, hurricanes, or much flooding. Instead, we are almost constantly faced with drought and have the possibility of severe fires looming in the future. While we can't prevent these natural disasters from happening, we can prepare ourselves for when they do happen. Notice that I said when they happen, not if they happen. We are going to be faced with natural disasters. We can't bank on the possibility that they will never affect us or our operation, because chances are, they will affect us at some point.

Be ready to leave your house immediately and know where these important items are so you can easily grab them on your way out of the house. If you are given an evacuation order, do not hesitate. Remember that while it is devastating to lose property and belongings, those are replaceable, you are not. Animals should be either loaded and taken with you or let loose so they can attempt to escape on their own. They should never be kept locked in a barn or pens, with no way to get out.

Important information to keep readily available:

- Insurance documents
- Proof of ownership for the property, vehicles, equipment, and animals
- Updated inventory of all items, animals, feed, etc. on your property

While insurance may seem pricey and often unnecessary, it is vital to rebuild an operation after a natural disaster. It is smart to obtain an insurance policy to cover your entire operation for all of the potential natural disasters that can occur in your area.

Items to keep on hand:

- Fire extinguisher for the house, shop, barn, etc.
- First aid kit
- Emergency kit for all people and companion animals with food, water, blankets, medications, etc.

I am going to share some information from Dave Pratt, Ranch Management Consultants. Dave talks about ways to fire proof your operation. He states that this is not done through over grazing to reduce fuel by the end of the year, it is instead done by making choices that will allow your operation to survive through a natural disaster, with minimal impacts. In his strategy, Dave focuses on three areas; proofing, managing through, and recovering from. In each of these three areas, an owner or manager should look at people, animals, money, and land. Think about what you can do to make sure that your land, people, and animals are prepared for a natural disaster. Then when that disaster occurs, think of how you can manage them through it. In the case of a drought, do you need to purchase more feed or thin your herd? Then plan how you will recover

from it, such as making a grazing strategy for land that is recovering from fire or caring for sick animals.

We all hope that we will not have to deal with a natural disaster on our operation, though we should be prepared for a disaster if we are faced with it!