

Safety Around the Barn and Animal Housing

Every year approximately 120,000 disabling injuries occur on farms, and 10% of the injuries result in death. Almost 30% of all farm-related injuries occur in buildings. The chance of injury in disasters is increased if general safety measures have not been implemented before the disaster strikes. Here are some recommendations that help mitigate injuries anytime and especially in disasters.

Barns and Stables

Trash or debris inside or outside of buildings should be eliminated. It is unsightly, is attractive to rodents, can start or aid in the spread of fire, and could cause an injury. Ornamental shrubbery around the exterior of a barn should not be poisonous to animals. County extension educators can assist in identifying any toxic plants.

No-smoking policies should be in effect throughout all areas where animals are kept. No-smoking signs should be posted at all exterior doorways, and sand buckets for cigarette butts should be available at the doors. No-smoking signs should be posted in lounges, in bathrooms, and in several other conspicuous places around the building.

Fire extinguishers of the correct size and type should be located at every exterior door, in the middle of long aisles, and next to the main electrical panel box. Every barn and stable should have emergency First Aid kits for both humans and animals. A phone with posted emergency numbers should be easily accessible.

Ample lighting approved by Underwriters Laboratories (UL) should be available for maximum visibility around the exterior of the building and throughout the interior. Wiring and switches should be encased in metal, weatherproof boxes that are out of reach of children and animals. The building should have lightning rods and be properly grounded.

Doorways and aisles should be free of obstructions and sharp projections. Ceilings should be 8 to 12 feet high. Doorframes should be a minimum of 8 feet high and 4 feet wide. Windows should be inaccessible to animals and covered with bars or with screening made of safety glass. The floor should be easily kept clean and should provide traction for animals, especially animals with shoes. Any damaged floors should be replaced immediately.

Stall and pen walls should be smooth, free of all projections, and of adequate size for the number of animals to be housed. Stall doors should have secure latches. Grooming and wash stalls should be in open areas, clean and well drained to prevent wet or icy barn floors. Cross ties and other areas where horses and livestock can be tied should have safety release snaps.

Water sources should be grounded to prevent accidental electrical shock. Feed tubs and water buckets should be smooth, clean, and placed securely at the proper height so that the animals cannot become entangled.

Hay storage should be away from heat and electrical sources, and if at all possible, in a separate building from where animals are housed. Stairs to haylofts should have handrails and be kept free of slippery substances and clutter. Railings should be installed around loft and ladder openings, and ladders should be firmly attached to the wall. Hay and bedding should be stacked so as not to fall on anyone.

Low beams and pipes (under 7 feet clearance), steps, and uneven floors should be marked as such. Tack rooms should have adequate racks and storage areas to keep equipment off the floor and out of the path of traffic. Hoses should be neatly hung in wash rack areas so that people and animals cannot become entangled.

Storage areas should be large enough to keep shovels, pitchforks, wheelbarrows, and other

tools safely away from animals. Items should be hung so that people cannot strike their head on them. Grain storage systems should be ratproof, weatherproof, and not accessible to animals. Areas around vents and fans should be kept clear. Fans should be maintained properly and cleaned frequently. Garbage receptacles should be available for refuse, baling twine, and wire.

Turnouts and Pastures

Turnout paddocks and pasture fencing should be sturdy, 4 to 6 feet in height, able to keep livestock and horses in, and able to keep unwanted animals and people out. Any protrusion on which animals could become caught should be removed. Fencing material should be suitable for the type of livestock being housed. Loose wires and broken boards or rails should be repaired immediately. Gates should be a minimum of 4 feet wide, swing freely, and have no sharp edges or corners.

Footing should be free of ruts and stones and well drained. Pastures and turnouts should be free of debris, foreign objects, and toxic plants. Machinery and equipment should not be left in pastures and turnouts.

Ponds and irrigation and pipe drainage ditches should be fenced. Fallen branches and tree stumps should be removed. Washouts should be fixed promptly. Any bridges should be strong enough to support animals and machinery that may pass over them.

Roadways

Roads and driveways should be wide and free of deep ruts and bumps. Low-hanging branches and shrubs should be trimmed. Gates should be wide enough for machinery and trucks to drive through and set back far enough that vehicles can pull off the main road to open or close the gate. Overhead wires should be high enough for trucks, trailers, tractors, and other equipment to pass under.

Farm vehicles should park in designated areas to keep roadways open for emergency vehicles. Neither vehicle nor trailer parking should be permitted next to barns and stables. Vehicular traffic should proceed slowly and with caution. Speed limit signs of 15 mph or lower should be posted, and the limit should be enforced.