

Protecting Livestock During A Hurricane

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As we all nervously take part in the countdown to June 1 which is the official start date of the Hurricane Season, now is the time to begin our hurricane preparation. This seems unfair as many of us are still attempting to clean and rebuild from the 2004 season, but nature doesn't seem to stop for anyone and proper preparation is crucial as last season proved to many.



The damage to agriculture caused by the four powerful hurricanes that hit Florida was great, with significant damage to livestock operations. Trees fell across fences, allowing livestock to get out, often along roads and highways, causing even greater complications. Recovery required removal of downed trees and repair of fences, as well as rounding up stray livestock and returning them to pastures.

The lessons learned from last hurricane season may help cattlemen prepare for the current season.

An excerpt from the National Extension Disaster Handbook, developed by UF/IFAS

- When the forces of a hurricane cause flooded conditions, livestock that are not in a confined area can usually take care of themselves. Do not, however, let them become trapped in low-lying pens.
- Provide feed and water for the livestock. Water is essential. Thirsty animals will try to break out to get to flood waters. If water is in short supply, limit the livestock's feed intake.
- Block off narrow passageways where animals would be unable to turn around. A few heavy animals in a narrow dead end can be dangerous not only to themselves but also to the buildings in which they are housed.
- Make provisions to block livestock from even remote access to herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers and treated seeds. Store agricultural chemicals and seeds where hurricane flood waters will not contaminate livestock feed or water.
- Turn off electricity at the main switch. Livestock could damage electric fixtures, causing fires or electrocutions.
- If there is a possibility that dairy barns may become flooded, drive cattle out of the barn. During the rapid rise of water, cattle often refuse to leave a barn and may drown in the water rises high enough in the barn.

For more information read [The Disaster Handbook](#).

Source: The Disaster Handbook, UF/IFAS Gainesville , FL