

Disaster Relief

Maintaining Livestock Health after a Flood

Disease Control

After a flood there may be danger of infectious diseases in livestock, but unless serious outbreaks of infection have occurred recently, there is no need to be alarmed. Observe these precautions:

- Where large numbers of animals assemble, watch for any sign of infectious diseases, such as pneumonia, foot rot, or leptospirosis.
 - These diseases are more likely to occur where cattle are crowded on wet ground and where there are lots of horn flies and houseflies.
 - If possible, an experienced stockman under the supervision of a veterinarian should handle and feed the animals.
- Promptly report any sign of disease to the nearest veterinarian or county Extension office.
- Contact a veterinarian about vaccinating animals for immunity from flood-related diseases, such as anthrax, leptospirosis, blackleg, and swine erysipelas.

Feed and Water

- Provide clean, uncontaminated water.
- Inspect feeds, such as corn, wheat, and hay.
 - Damaged grains and moldy hay may cause digestive disturbances.
 - Horses, sheep, poultry, swine, and cattle are affected most severely (in that order) by damaged feed.
 - Do not force livestock to eat silage that has been flooded, even though it may not look any different.
 - Do not feed any feed or forage that may have been contaminated by chemicals or pesticides.

Pastureland

- Standing water may have ruined some pastures.
 - Lack of adequate forage could force animals to eat poisonous plants that are abundant in some parts of the country.
 - Remove fallen wild cherry limbs from pastures to prevent livestock poisoning.
- Before restocking flooded pastures, remove debris, especially along fence lines and in corners. Livestock could be injured from pieces of barbed wire, sharp metal, and trash.

Protect Dairy Cows

- Try to milk at regular times. It is better to lose the milk from one milking than to stress high-producing cows.
- If you must use a neighbor's milking parlor, try to keep the two herds separate.
- If feed supplies are limited, give the largest portion of available feed to the highest-producing cows and those recently fresh. This may be a good time to cull less productive animals from the herd.
- Clean and sanitize milking parlor, dairy barn, milking equipment, and feed handling equipment before returning to normal use.
- Watch for signs of mastitis, which is likely to flare up as cows are stressed because of changes in milking procedures, equipment, and/or milking schedules.

Sanitation

- Clean out hog houses, barns, and chicken houses.
 - Spray buildings with a good disinfectant before animals occupy them again.
 - Air buildings thoroughly before they are dried out.
- Remove debris from dairy barns.
- Scrub and disinfect walls, ceilings, floors, stanchions, and other equipment.
- Scrub the milk house and equipment with detergent and hot water.
- Sanitize equipment, walls, ceilings, and floors with dairy sanitizing products.
- Dispose of animal carcasses promptly. If there is no rendering company operating nearby, burn or bury carcasses deeply in a place approved by your local soil conservation office.

Insects

Mosquitoes and other pests may be abundant after a flood. They not only annoy animals, but some species carry disease. Spray animals with an insect repellent as recommended by your county Extension office.

From The Disaster Handbook - 1998 National Edition, University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences SP 2431.

Revised by **Lamar Adams**, County Extension Director

Mississippi State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or group affiliation, age, disability, or veteran status.

Information Sheet 1736

Extension Service of Mississippi State University, cooperating with U.S. Department of Agriculture.
Published in furtherance of Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914. VANCE H. WATSON, Interim
Director (POD 06-06)