

Livestock Farmers' Disaster Handbook



Bearing in mind that Jamaica is sensitively located in a disaster region, yearly affected by hurricanes, flooding and landslides, farmers must be aware of how to minimize the effects of natural catastrophes. Farming practices are also susceptible to man-made threats such as fires and power outages; hence prevention measures are needed.

Farmers' prevention methods will vary from each other; yet, disaster preparedness is a necessary activity for all.

PRE-PLANNING

One of the major and most overlooked tasks of disaster preparedness is planning. Pre-planning will ensure that daily practices reduce the possible impacts to be faced and helps us to get back to business quickly after a disaster. Below are some considerations.

- Develop a rearing calendar that includes timing of hurricane preparedness tasks to be completed by the end of May.
- Establish farm buildings away from flood-prone areas, where possible.
- Join your local farmers' group and establish a revolving credit fund to assist with hurricane damage recovery.
- Identify dump sites in centralized locations, for disposal of waste which cannot be composted, used for soil conservation, etc.
- Before a hurricane, identify vehicles and operators required to carry out recovery efforts in specified areas.
- Make a list of all equipment, tools, business records, stationery etc. and assign the responsibility for the safety of these valuables to one person.
- Store business records in a safe, dry area.
- Store tools, equipment, pesticides, plastic bags, etc. in a safe, dry area preferably on pallets or on a raised area.
- Regularly prune shade trees to prevent heavy overhanging branches from breaking and falling on livestock.
- Always ensure that you have more than one week's supply of feed, water, medication, pesticides, fertilizer etc. in storage.

At release of warning

Farmers should take the following precautions to reduce the likelihood of being electrocuted, hit by lightning or washed away by flood currents.

- Make a checklist of all farm animals
- Place identification marks on all animals
- Obtain enough livestock feed, medicines, water etc. to last at least one week.
- Stockpile feed and place at least 2 feet above ground in a dry, flood-resistant and leak proof area.
- Remove cattle and small ruminants from low lying areas to higher ground away from river banks and areas likely to have landslides or flooding.



Cow with two identification markers: a yellow ID tag in the ear and branding on upper leg area.

- Release larger stock such as cattle, horses, mules etc. in an open field area. Tying animals increases the chances of injury.
- Collect any eggs from poultry
- Prune trees near all buildings inclusive of livestock houses.
- Check, strengthen and secure farm buildings and livestock sheds as much as possible.
- Take backyard chickens and other domestic birds into a building and place them safely in a cage or box if possible.
- Store medication and feed away from chemicals, fertilizers and toxic materials such as sprays or pesticides. All should be stored in secure, dry areas.

During a storm/hurricane

- Maintain open communications with all farm personnel.
- Note all reports of damage for checking after the event.

Recovery measures

After the hurricane or flood, the farm should be returned to production as soon as possible.

- Remove zinc sheets, lumber, nails, etc. that can cause damage to animals.
- Clean-up debris of damaged plants
- Salvage valuable trees or plants
- Dispose of dead animals immediately by composting, burial or burning.
- Clean and repair cages, pens, houses as soon as possible and return animals.
- Check for signs of pneumonia and others illnesses as disease in animals may increase after a flood/storm.
- Report signs of livestock infection to vet.
- Keep vaccinations up-to-date.
- Provide clean and uncontaminated water and feed.
- Clear pasture land.
- Prop-up trees with 14 days of storm; cover roots with top soil and mulch.
- Spray for mosquitoes and other insect pests where necessary
- Assess property for damage to buildings, animals, equipment etc.
- Check your surroundings for danger from fallen electrical wires or trees, pesticide spills, dead animals, etc.
- Check with neighbours and colleagues to ascertain their well-being for later assistance.
- Call your RADA extension officer, Parish office, farm group leadership, agriculture emergency operations centre (EOC) and report the damage caused by the hurricane.
- Inspect chemical stores; clean-up any chemical spillage to avoid poisoning and restrict contamination of water sources.
- Effect repairs to store houses and other structures, if necessary.
- Unclog drains, sink holes and canals to free up the passage of water.
- Repair drain, and canal infrastructure, electrical power lines (using competent electrician), pumping stations if necessary.

