

Fire Season is upon us, earlier than ever. Being properly prepared can be the difference between getting your animals safely evacuated and having to turn them loose and hope for the best. However, it is the nature of spontaneous fires that even the most well-prepared barn can be caught unaware. Below are some tips and information to help you be as ready as possible for fire season.

Before Fire Season:

- Practice loading. Once your animals are comfortable loading in the daytime in your trailer, begin adding some additional elements they may encounter in an emergency situation. Practice loading at night, in open stock trailers and enclosed trailers, with and without ramps, if they are comfortable loading in the peace and quiet of your home, maybe play some loud music or include other distractions. An evacuation is very hectic, and animals may panic.
- Ensure all of your animals are up to date on their vaccinations, parasite control, and coggins tests. Often, evacuated animals will all congregate in areas such as fairgrounds or rodeo arenas. You will want to make sure your animals are as protected as possible against any disease which could be transmitted in these situations, as well as ensuring they aren't transmitting any diseases to other animals.
- Consider having your animals permanently identified in some fashion that can be traced back to you, such as a microchip. Branding and tattooing are other options, but it may be more difficult to track down the brand book and who the brand is registered to (you will also, if you don't have one already, need to create a brand, register it, order a branding iron, as well as the actual act of branding your animals). Burros are typically microchipped in the nuchal ligament of the neck, which vets often prefer to do under sedation; yearly dentals are a great time to have this done. For the last several years BLM has microchipped burros and mustangs during their processing. If you have a BLM animal they may already be chipped, but you will need to check to ensure the chip is registered to you.
- Take photos of your animals: both sides, front and back, and any distinguishing features such as scars or whorls and upload those photos to the cloud so you are able to prove ownership. A copy of a coggins test or health certificate with photos, brands, tattoos, and/or a microchip number, or registration papers, uploaded to the cloud are also useful for proving ownership. Put ownership paperwork, BLM titles, registration papers, your bill of sale, etc into a file folder that can be easily grabbed in an evacuation.
- Make an emergency escape bag or box. A duffle bag or backpack that is easy to grab and carry, leaving your hands free may be best. This should include items like a first aid kit, a few days of essential medications, natural cloth, such as a cotton bandana, that can be used as a blindfold for your animal or a mask for you, extra halters and leads, KN95 masks, goggles, leather gloves (to be used to not only protect your hands from rope burn, but also hot surfaces such as fence posts. For this reason rubber-palmed gloves or those made out of synthetic material like Mechanix gloves are perhaps not the best choice). If possible: leave this bag or box in your trailer or on your way out the door.
- If possible: store a bale of hay or bag of hay pellets in your trailer during fire season (a minimum of 1 meal for each animal). This will make sure your animals have at least 1 meal of their regular food after evacuation and help with immediate stress of displacement.
- Have enough correctly sized halters and leads for all your animals and ensure they are in good working order. Dry or rotted leather or nylon can easily break in an emergency, leaving you trying to collect a panicked loose animal.
- Have a plan for identifying your animals should they need to be turned loose. Most evacuation sites do not recommend turning your animals loose with halters or collars on, as they can get caught on buildings, fences, brush, or debris, and in some cases synthetic materials can melt and burn your animal. Below are some photo examples of ways to identify your animals. A quick search for "horse fire identification" will return lots of results. As your burro may have insufficient mane for some of these

methods, you can use their tail switch or livestock chalk markers as an alternative (or both, for added peace of mind).



- Routinely check your trailer's readiness, including floorboards, wiring, and tire pressure. Ensure you have the proper hitch and pins in the trailer. If the vehicle you typically use to pull the trailer is not on the property or is evacuating others, you don't want to be left with no way to hook up your trailer.
- Practice hitching up your trailer. An active evacuation is no time to realize you require a second person to assist.
- Make a readiness plan.
 - Contact friends or neighbors in the area who are willing and able to assist with evacuation in the event you are not present at your home.
 - If you don't own your own trailer, make attempts to locate 2-3 trailer owners who would be willing to help in an emergency.
 - Make a plan of where you will evacuate your animals to. It was mentioned above that often fairgrounds or arenas are used for equine evacuation, but you may need to make further accommodations for other livestock such as pigs, sheep/goats, cattle, large birds such as rattites, or camelids

When Under Fire or Evacuation Warnings:

- Many places use a "ready, set, GO!" or "green, yellow, red" warning system, where the first "ready" or "green" means there is no imminent fire danger, "set" or "yellow" indicates you should prepare to evacuate, and "GO!" or "red" means evacuate immediately. HOWEVER: if you have livestock and are able, especially if you don't have your own trailer or have enough trailer space for all your animals, it is

prudent to begin evacuating your animals on “set” or “yellow”. There may not be time to do so once mandatory evacuation orders are given.

- Mark your animals with your contact information. If you are using marking chalk, it can be hard to legibly mark an agitated animal. It's better to do this prior to evacuation orders to save time and frustration. Be sure to choose colors that show up well on your animal, for instance orange chalk may not be as legible on a chestnut/sorrel horse as green would be. If you are new to using livestock marking chalk: a film will typically develop on the end of the stick which will inhibit marking. A quick, firm swipe on a flat rock, fencepost, trailer tire, etc will clear this film and allow you to mark your animal.
- Remove fly masks, sheets, or any other items from your animals which could become caught on flora, fences, structures, etc, or which may melt or catch fire themselves.