



## WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS

# Wildfire protection for horse properties

Due to their open construction, horse stables and barns can pose unique challenges during a wildfire. If you live in an area prone to this threat, planning ahead can go a long way in keeping both people and animals out of harm's way. Use the following information to guide your preparations.

### Well in advance of wildfire season

- Install sprinkler systems throughout the entire structure if feasible. Commonly used combustible materials such as hay and shavings can easily ignite from flying embers and pose a significant risk to these open structures.
- Identify and reduce hazards of fire risk on your horse property. The same principals of defensible space and structure hardening used to prepare residences can be applied to any structure.
- Create 100 feet of defensible space around each structure by minimizing vegetation and combustibles by using the same principals used for homes.
- Create hardened structures by using fire resistant building materials such as stucco, metal, tile, etc. Avoid using or replace any wood materials especially on the roof.
- Specialty ember resistant venting, such as Brandguard Vents, are important to install in enclosed structures, such as houses; however, they don't add as much protection if the structure is open, such as barns, stables and other animal shelters. See video: [Wildfire Readiness Ember Resistant Venting](#).
- Prior to wildfire season, inspect buildings for potential flammables. Always keep all roof surfaces and gutters free from debris to prevent ember ignition. Remove hazardous vegetation along fences, buildings and walls by creating fuel breaks, which are gaps in dense vegetation to slow or stop wildfire progress.
- Plant and maintain fire resistive landscaping near structures, avoiding ornate junipers/cypress or any highly flammable vegetation. Keep mature trees limbed up 6-10 feet from the ground and remove any fine fuels (grasses, etc.) underneath of them. See video: [Wildfire Readiness Juniper & Cypress Tree Hazards](#).
- Replace wood bark or mulch with fire resistive materials (stone, gravel, hardscape) within 5-10 feet of any structure to prevent ember ignition. See Video: [Wildfire Readiness Avoiding Bark Mulch](#).
- Store flammable materials such as hay, shavings, firewood, lumber, flammable liquids for farm equipment at least 30 feet from barns and under a fire-resistant tarp if necessary.
- Prepare and update an evacuation plan to get staff and horses out of harm's way and to safety. Include routes/access to other facilities near and outside the area that can accommodate your horses. Have more than one evacuation location planned if possible. Long-term smoke potential may not make one option viable.
- Ensure vehicles and trailers used for transport are in good working order with ample fuel. Tires, brakes, lights, trailer flooring, etc. should all be in proper working order before an emergency.
- Determine whether health certificates are required from your vet if ever trailering your horses across certain state lines.

## WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS

### When a wildfire is approaching

- Decide whether to evacuate or shelter animals in place. If evacuation is the best choice or mandatory, do it as soon as possible. If evacuating, consider having enough distance to avoid smoke impact to horses.
- Prepare emergency care kits for at home and away. Suggested items include spare halters, lead ropes, horse medications, food, first aid supplies and water.
- Ready vehicles by hitching up trailers, parking them facing evacuation route, put emergency supplies/kits inside and keys in ignition. Check trailer tires every few months to avoid flat tires and have spare tires ready.
- Put up a sign in a visible location, preferably near the entrance of each building, informing first responders how many and what type of animals are sheltering in place.
- Gather basic documentation (pictures, Coggins, microchip ID, etc.) and place them in an accessible location. This will be helpful if you need to cross state lines or identify your horse after an event.
- Evaluate your trailering capacity and plan, including number of horses, feed, hay, water and fuel, in case of evacuation.
- Practice loading horses on trailers if they have not traveled recently.
- Formalize shelter-in-place plans and stock up on adequate supplies.
- Keep at least two copies of your natural disaster plan in an easily accessible location and share with key people.
- Use social media to connect with equine evacuation and assistance groups. These are great ways to share best practices.
- Contact and organize your local network/community when a catastrophe has been forecasted.

### *If safe, also do the following before evacuating:*

- To protect against ember ignition:
  - Close all structure openings such as doors, windows, loft openings.
  - Remove any flammable items such as patio furniture/padding, dog/animal bedding, fire wood, fiber-based doormats, etc. at least 30 feet away from the structure or place inside of the structure.
- Open gates connected to wood fences, especially if fence is attached or next to structure.
- Make sure all gates are unlocked for easy access by firefighters and/or animal rescue. Open electrical gates in case of power failure.
- Turn on exterior lights so structures are visible to firefighters in smoke or darkness.
- Connect garden hoses to outside water spigots for use by firefighters.
- Move propane tanks or grills away from any structures.
- Leave any metal ladders propped up against the structure for quick roof access.
- Turn off any air-conditioned buildings and shut off gas at the meter if applicable; turn off pilot lights.

### After a wildfire has passed

- When checking the property, be very careful of live electrical wires caused by downed trees and power lines.
- Check barn and stalls for damage, flooding and debris.
- Walk pasture to check for debris and damage to fencing and make necessary repairs prior to turning horses out.
- Take photographs of all damages before making repairs.
- Call your independent insurance agent or broker to report any damage.

## WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS

### Additional considerations for horses boarded off premises

For horses boarded off-site at a professional facility, consider asking barn managers the following:

- How does the facility prepare for wildfires?
- Does barn management have a wildfire evacuation plan? What are your responsibilities in the plan?
- How is the property prepared and protected in the event of a wildfire forecast?
- If horses are not evacuated, how are they kept safe and are they marked with identifiable information?

For more information, please contact your independent insurance advisor and review these additional resources:

[www.readyforwildfire.org](http://www.readyforwildfire.org)

[www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org)

[Protecting Horse Properties Against Wildfire](#) (article)

[www.aigprivateclient.com/equine](http://www.aigprivateclient.com/equine) (includes referrals to independent insurance advisors when needed)



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