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A Weekly Column from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

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For Immediate Release

Livestock Disaster Plans Are Needed In Every County

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In mid-August I participated in the Bovine Emergency Response Plan (BERP) training in Sioux Center hosted by Trans Ova. The day focused on livestock disasters while cattle are in transit. With over fifty million head of cattle on the road each year in the United States, it's not a question of if, it is when a disaster will strike.

Currently in the United States, standard operating procedures for addressing accidents involving the transportation of livestock do not exist. BERP has developed a framework for local emergency responders and law enforcement to more appropriately address accidents involving cattle transport vehicles. This plan includes standardized procedures and suggestions and materials for dispatchers and first responders in the areas of call assessment, scene arrival and assessment, scene containment and security, extraction of cattle from the trailer, relocation of cattle involved in the accident, mortality disposal, securing the wrecked transport vehicle, humane euthanasia of cattle and responder debriefing.

The plan prioritizes the needs of people - the safety of first responders, public safety and then animal care.

This framework of "best management practices" for developing local plans was created by Extension professionals from across the country including Iowa, North Dakota, Tennessee, Ohio and West Virginia. In addition, information is available from The Center for Food Security and Public Health at Iowa State University.

Counties looking to develop an animal emergency response plan should review these resources or contact the Extension Dairy or Livestock Specialist in their area. As the old saying in emergency management goes, "the time to develop your plan is not when you have red lights flashing in your eyes and sirens blaring in your ears."

Now, not all animal disasters happen on the road, and producers should recognize emergencies that could impact the farm, such as: a flood, fire, tornado, bioterrorism event or animal disease. A disaster on-farm can impact a producer's ability to care for animals, operate, and move milk or animals off the farm. After human safety, proper care (housing, feed and water) for animals is the primary concern.

Critical contacts, animal moving equipment, off-farm emergency animal housing locations and emergency power and water supplies must all be planned for in advance of a disaster.

In the instance of a dairy farm, a map of the dairy can be helpful. Locations of hazardous materials, emergency keys and equipment storage areas are items that should be on the farm's emergency checklist. An excellent template for a farm emergency preparedness plan is also available from The Center for Food Security and Public Health at:
http://www.prep4agthreats.org/All-Hazard-Preparedness/farm-emergency-preparedness-plan.

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