

## Chapter 12

# Horse Farm Emergency Action Plans

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Animal waste spills have the potential to harm human and environmental health. Therefore, it is in the public's best interest to prevent spills. Prevention is generally less costly than clean-up. Although external factors, such as heavy rainfall, can play a part, spills and leaks are often due to human error or equipment failure. Alterations in farm construction and operating practices can reduce the potential environmental contamination. Care must be taken during the transportation, storage and spreading of horse waste. Vehicle accidents can easily result in the deposition of manure in compromising situations.

A site specific emergency response plan provides a step-by-step process for procedures to address a manure emergency such as may be caused by a tornado, hurricane or flood. Being site specific, the plan assures that producers and their employees are aware of proper initial containment strategies, that the proper authorities are notified, and that necessary equipment to implement the plan is available.

For emergencies involving catastrophic animal mortalities or accidental leakage of manure nutrients, the action plan normally will include

- Recognition and assessment of the problem
- Notification of proper authorities
- Enlistment of help from other producers and others to correct the problem,
- Restoration of the affected area to its original condition.

To ensure prompt response to a request for assistance, producers should make reciprocal arrangements with neighboring farms, and discuss their plans with other businesses whose expertise or equipment may be needed.

In deciding who might serve on a response team, consider the potential emergencies that might occur on your farm and the number of personnel who will be available at any given time to corrective action. If the risk is small, the farm manager or owner will likely serve as the response team leader. In other cases, where manure discharge has a greater potential for disaster, either in terms of magnitude or environmental impact, the response team leader may be a service manager for a contract company or other off farm, technically trained individuals. Off-farm people should not be considered as first response leaders in most situations.

Each farm should identify all locations where system failure may occur, and identify the magnitude of failure potential. Examples may include stacked bedding where seepage could enter surface water or existing ditches, the potential of the farm site to hurricane damage, and the proximity to a flood plain. Seepage may also occur from buildings or

property stacked and covered manure due to blocked or ruptured pipes, heavy rainfall events, failed pumps, and a host of unforeseen problems. Spills may also occur with trucks and manure spreaders.

All live animal farms have routine death loss where farm management has planned for disposal of carcasses. It is possible for a number of types of events to cause massive deaths in a very short period of time. These events may include fire, storm effects or disease. This type of loss usually exceeds the farm's dead animal disposal plan. Plans should include who to call and where to seek help if catastrophic events occur.

Farms must have a master plan that describes what to do with each type of spillage event. Persons finding the spill of failure should immediately contact the response team leader. All employees should be instructed in how to turn off water lines or pumps that may be causing the spillage.

Study the drainage patterns from your farm and envision where a manure discharge will flow while it is on your property and after it leaves your property. Determine the point at which the discharge might enter surface waters. For some farms, manure may travel long distances before entering a ditch or stream. In other cases, the stream may be nearby, demanding a much faster response.

## **Emergency Plan Contents**

### **A. Developing The Individual Site Plan**

A well coordinated, timely response will show the professionalism and concern of the facility's personnel, and will help avoid many of the negative impacts of the emergency. Minimizing adverse impacts of an emergency is important because the stakes are high. Poor responses to emergencies can lead to personal injuries, economic losses, negative public reaction, and increased scrutiny by regulatory officials. Manage the system with storm warnings as part of the plan.

1. Catastrophic death is most likely to be caused by natural acts. Past events have been due to tornados, hurricanes & floods.
2. Smoke and fire may cause tragic losses on a single farm site, but usually not affect great areas.
3. Disease outbreaks may cause higher than normal mortality.

### **B. Prevention**

1. Prevent or minimize potential damage caused by threatening natural occurrences such as hurricanes or strong storms associated with approaching fronts – actions include:
  - a. Do not spread waste on fields just prior to an approaching storm.
  - b. Do not spread waste on fields that flood during high rainfall events.
2. Plan for the containment of seepage water below the stacked manure, in the direction of runoff. Maintain the manure handling system and:

- a. Inspect equipment regularly and maintain a log.
- b. Provide warning devices and keep good records.
- c. Understand the operation of all application equipment.