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## **Disaster Preparedness**

Hurricane Andrew was an eye-opening event for Florida horse owners. Many horses died in their stalls because their barns collapsed around them, fences failed allowing horses to get out on roadways or tangled in the fencing and wandering horses got electrocuted or suffered severe dehydration looking for water sources. This led to the Sunshine State Horse Council gathering together information on what worked and didn't work to save lives. In this newsletter we have pulled together the most pertinent information for our area and given you a place to start planning.

A huge lesson learned was to be prepared! Assessing your risk level and forming a plan for your animals, your family and yourself ahead of time is key. There are many fantastic websites such as [www.sshc.org/evac/disaster.htm](http://www.sshc.org/evac/disaster.htm) and [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) which will help you start. We face some unique challenges when evacuating our horses. If you decide to evacuate it must be done early since your horse trailer will become difficult to drive once winds get above 35-40 mph. It will also be necessary to leave someone to take care of the horses while evacuated and transport all feed and hay needed. It may be an option to "locally" evacuate your horses to a more secure location. Checking with local horses show facilities (like Canterbury), neighbors and friends may provide a safe alternative. Many of us have more horses than trailer space so decisions will have to be made about which horses get evacuated and which ones stay home. These decisions are always easier to make before the hurricane is headed straight for us!



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To the surprise of many, the safest place for your horse is in a large, well fenced pasture. What fencing was best was also surprising. As it turns out, mesh fences such as no-climb worked best. Mesh fencing acted as a net to grab debris and wrap it up.

The fence also withstood very strong winds and was still effective at containing livestock. Board fencing and barbed wire caused the most damage. Flying debris broke boards, which became flying debris themselves, allowing livestock to escape. Barbed wire caused numerous horrific lacerations, causing horses to be euthanized. By giving horses a large fenced area they were able to move around to the safest location and weather the storm there. Another important tip when setting up your property: ensure pastures are set up to keep horses away from power lines if they come down.

Horses that were found following Hurricane Andrew had to be reunited with their owners. The importance of animal identification was further highlighted by Hurricane Katrina. Microchips proved to be the most definitive way to prove identity but only up close. Rescue personnel found large phone numbers written in grease pen to be the most helpful. Your phone number on your horse allowed them to identify readily that the horse was owned, who the owner was and the address of the owner.

If area phones were working, rescue workers could then contact the owners. Because area phones are often down, it is recommended to put a second phone number on your horse of someone who lives out of the area. There are several ways to get all this information on your horse. One way is to write everything in permanent fabric marker on a strip of sheet. Braid this in to your horse's mane and/or tail. This can also be done with dog tags. Writing down all your information on a piece of paper, placing it in a Ziploc bag and duct taping it to your horse's halter is another way to keep critical information on your horse.



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A few quick things were identified that proved helpful post-disaster:

- Install a hand pump on your well.
- As you landscape your property, use native plants. Native plants are used to native weather and are less likely to be uprooted.
- Get mobile home tie downs to secure vehicles and trailers - in the middle of the largest open area away from trees and buildings.
- Have a disaster supply kit that includes: flashlight, battery operated radio, extra batteries, fire extinguishers, chlorine bleach, blankets, clothing, ready to eat food, first aid supplies, water, prescription medicines, eyeglasses and cash. Update and check equipment at the beginning of each hurricane season.
- Have on hand a box packed with halters, leads, duct tape, tarps and plastic, fly spray and animal medical supplies including bandages and medicines. Store in water proof container and secure
- A two week supply of animal feed and medications should be brought in to the house and stored in water proof containers



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- Photograph or video property and animals, and take film/tape with you if you must  
evacuate.