



Fires are dangerous anywhere, but on the farm they pose unique perils for animals and their owners. Toxic fumes can kill or cause permanent lung damage.

Panicked animals behave unpredictably or refuse to respond to normal handling approaches. They may trap themselves and their rescuers in a rapidly spreading fire.

Work with your local fire department to minimize fire risk on your farm. Formulate an emergency fire plan and practice it regularly with family members and employees.

Likewise, conduct periodic fire safety inspections. Above all, remember that your first priority should always be human safety—and that includes you.



Photo Courtesy of Cindy Cross-Greenia

Work with your local fire department to minimize fire risk on your farm. Formulate an emergency fire plan and practice it regularly with family members and employees.

This information was developed with the assistance of
University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension



Produced by
The Vermont Barn Fire Prevention Task Force



a sub-committee of the
Vermont Rural Fire Protection Task Force
In cooperation with



NORTHERN VERMONT RESOURCE CONSERVATION
& DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Office of US Senator Bernie Sanders

The USDA is an equal opportunity employer.



Barn Fire Prevention Task Force

FARM FIRE SAFETY

Evacuation of Livestock During a Fire



FARM FIRE SAFETY

PRIORITIES

It is typical for farmers to try and rescue animals, people have been seriously injured or killed when trying to save animals, feed or equipment on their farms. They forget that smoke and toxic fumes can kill them in seconds. If you do decide to attempt a rescue please keep the following tips in mind;

- **Human safety, including your own life, must be your first priority.** Make sure you, your family members and employees are safe. Call the fire department immediately and let the experts take control. If you can use a fire extinguisher on a small fire realize its limitations.
- **Your property, as a business investment, comes second.** When your farmstead is burning, it's time to make your hardest business decisions. Firefighting crews may ask you which building to save first, second, third, etc. Ask yourself if it is more important to save livestock, machinery or feed. If a livestock building is on fire, animals may already have been exposed to deadly heat, smoke and gases. It may be safer and more realistic to save an adjacent building or vehicles stored inside it.



EVACUATION OF LIVESTOCK

Livestock evacuation is very risky business. If fire or smoke is significant within an animal building, the danger is generally too great to risk your own life. Some considerations include:

- ▶ **Smoke, fire, burning insulation and toxic fumes.** Some types of insulation consume oxygen, give off poisonous smoke or “rain fire” — that is, they may melt and drip as they burn. Fiberglass doesn't burn. Be aware of the type of insulation in your barns and anticipate how it might react in a blaze. Remember that smoke inhalation and heat already may have harmed your animals to the extent they need to be destroyed. Don't be the next victim.
- ▶ **Animals may refuse to leave the building.** Cows and horses tend to panic if they are frightened or forced to use a secondary exit. In some cases, evacuated animals run back into burning buildings. Some farmers have had luck leading a few panicked animals out by throwing a gunnysack over their heads.
- ▶ **Don't become trapped.** If you are able to evacuate animals, be sure you are not leading them toward a dead-end, such as a gate that won't open outward.
- ▶ **Containment may be the best answer.** Oxygen fuels a fire. Sometimes it is best to close the doors and wait for the fire department. Poultry buildings, especially, are prone to flash fires because of their construction and the large amounts of dust inside. If you open the door, a burning poultry building is likely to burst into flames.
- ▶ **Smoldering hay.** If hay is slowly smoldering in an upper level of a barn or silo, call the fire department and, if possible, begin evacuation. This is one instance where you may have enough time for a quiet, orderly evacuation. DO NOT try to throw smoldering hay out a window or door; exposure to oxygen fuels a blaze.

All farms, large and small should periodically be evaluated for potential hazards and conditions that could lead to a fire.

The Vermont Barn Fire Task Force has a fire safety information and checklists that are designed to assist Vermonters to reduce the risk of fire occurring on their farm properties.

For additional information go to www.vtfiresafety.org