



Halalmeats, Inc.

Emergency Preparedness for Small Ruminants

When fences are down after a hurricane, uncontrolled sheep, goats, llamas, and alpacas are at risk from dogs, wild predators, moving vehicles and malicious people. In their search for food and disorientation, these small ruminants can also interfere with post-hurricane public and vehicular transportation.

Immediately after the Hurricane

Immediately after the storm, you will begin the process of gathering animals that have scattered. Hopefully, you made plans for this before the hurricane, and gained permission from authorities to use a local area with a solid perimeter fence, such a soccer field, softball field, tennis court, etc. If not, the first order of business is to repair fencing or establish temporary fencing with livestock panels or other suitable material to contain small ruminants. You may have to improvise a pen from whatever materials you may have on hand. If you have goats on the loose, you need a rigid fence instead of flexible plastic barrier materials.

Avoid enclosing areas around landscaped yards, since many ornamental plants are toxic to livestock.

If needed, build temporary enclosures around trees or small buildings with a fence, so livestock can have some shelter. Llamas and alpacas can get overheated without shade. You can provide shade by parking a semi-trailer (18-wheeler) in the fenced enclosure where livestock can get out of the sun by getting below the trailer, which could double as a bedding area as well as protect weaned animals from rain or full sun.

Make sure that you have a five-gallon bucket or similar container with which you can provide fresh water daily.

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Plan enough bedding area. Sheep and goats need two square yards of space per animal; llamas and alpacas need about five square yards per animal.

Plan enough grassy area for grazing during the day since hay supplies may not be available for weeks after a hurricane. Five sheep, goats or alpacas can be maintained on one acre of grassy area during the grass's growing season. Llamas need twice the amount of grazing area. Hurricanes normally arrive in the fall, so grazing may be limited. Before a hurricane, it is a good idea to buy feed and supplemental hay for a potential emergency. Having several bags of feed grain on hand will help to gather wandering, uncontrolled animals and supplement grazing until hay supplies are available.

Directed Movement

The next step is to use the animals' flocking instinct to gather groups for control behind fencing. Don't worry about sorting animals until you have them all gathered and controlled. Sheep and goats regroup quickly with the same species or pen mates. Llamas and alpacas will group together with the llamas dominating.

Regularly fed animals will follow a feed bucket with grain. Use this strategy to get the dominant animals to follow you into the fenced enclosure by holding the feed bucket up and shaking it. If animals have been without feed for a while, they may try to rush the feed bucket, so be prepared to move quickly so they will follow you instead of running you over. Male llamas may present a challenge, since they place themselves in front of their flock to protect them; getting the male llama to follow the feed bucket is the key. Another technique is to use a leashed llama or goat to get the other animals to follow you into the enclosure. Do not try to drive or rush the animals; let them naturally follow into the enclosure. Having adult volunteers at the edges to gently urge stragglers to move in the desired direction helps keep the flock together and enter the enclosed area at one time so you can close the gate.

Food

Try to repair or improvise enough fenced grass (St. Augustine, bahiagrass, bermudagrass, native grasses, etc.) to provide grazing for livestock. One acre of grassy area can support 5 sheep, goats or alpacas, but half the number of llamas. Livestock penned in areas where they cannot graze will have to be fed hay (do not feed alfalfa hay because animals may bloat) or freshly cut grass. In an emergency, a machete can be used to cut native grasses to be fed on a daily basis to livestock. In the best circumstances, you or your community will have bought some emergency supplies of grass hay before the hurricane. If this has not been done, you will have to cut and bring about 3 pounds of grass hay per small ruminant each day (one square bale will feed about 15 to 20 small ruminants each day). Do not feed any more than about a quarter of a pound of grain per small ruminant each day (feeding too much grain can cause bloat, scours, acidosis and other digestive problems).

Health

Once animals are gathered, controlled and fed, they can be separated and inspected for health problems. This is a good time to record identifying tattoos, ear tags and collars that will help identify animal owners who can be informed of where their animal is. Hopefully, you and your community have made arrangements with local veterinarians for a contingency like this. To assist veterinarians, be sure to have adult volunteers who are familiar with safely handling small ruminants. If animals are injured beyond

treatment, they should be humanely put down.

Hurricane preparedness includes having a community plan before the hurricane arrives that has:

- Designated person or agency in charge of small ruminant emergency preparedness
- Designated fenced area, such as a ball field, where roaming animals can be collected or a supply of livestock panels and materials to make temporary pens, shelter and fencing, water troughs, hay racks, etc.
- “Chain of command” plans for purchasing hay, feed and storing water at the designated site as well as prepared volunteers/staff to help gather and handle animals
- Designated veterinarian prepared to assist with livestock health
- List of community goat, sheep, alpaca, and llama owner addresses and phone numbers so collected livestock can be returned

After the hurricane event, emergency conditions may require volunteers to take many of these duties on themselves to make sure livestock are safe, well nourished, humanely treated, and returned to their rightful owners.

