HURRICANE SEASON IS HERE!

Hurricane Season is here again starting June 1st and running through the end of October. Don’t wait until the storm is already here to prepare your plan of action – do it now! Regardless of whether you keep your horses at home or whether you board your horse, you need to decide what actions you’ll take in the event of a hurricane.

The first thing you need to decide is whether you should stay put or seek shelter elsewhere in the event of a storm. Decide this well in advance (several days!) and not just 12 hours before the predicted landfall. If you live in a low-lying area that is flood prone or in an area where you or your horses may be unsafe in the event of a storm, you should make evacuation plans. The most important part of evacuating is to do it well in advance of the storm, especially when horses are involved. You won’t be able to haul horses in the high winds that precede a hurricane so plan to leave several days in advance of the storm’s landfall. Find a friend who can board your horses farther inland or take your horses to one of the designated evacuation sites available across the state, such as the Hunt Horse Complex in Raleigh or the Bob Martin Ag Center in Willamston. Be sure to take copies of your current Coggins along with any medications your horse may need. Have at least 7 days worth of feed on hand, regardless of whether you decide to leave or stay put.

The high winds during a hurricane (along with the not-so-uncommon tornadoes that go along with it) can make a weapon out of any object left unsecured on your property. This includes jumps, trashcans, outdoor furniture, flower pots, etc. Be sure anything that is left outside is secured properly.

Clean drinking water may become scarce after the storm due to power outages or water contamination. Try to store enough drinking water for a seven day supply. Each horse should be allowed 20 gallons per day. Fill up all of your water buckets and troughs. Line your trashcans with plastic bags and fill those up with water too. If your water pump can be run off of a generator, be sure you have plenty of gasoline on hand and check ahead of time to be sure the generator is working properly.

Many people are concerned about where to put their horses during a storm. If your barn is sturdy and designed to withstand hurricane force winds, then you might want to leave your horses in the barn. If you barn is not well
constructed or is not designed to withstand strong winds, turn them out. Horses have outstanding survival instincts and many can weather the storm quite well outdoors. Regardless of where your horses ride out the storm, be sure that you have some form of identification on them that includes your name, address, and phone number. This can be anything such as an ID tag braided into their manes or tails or a phone number spray painted or written on their bodies with a livestock marker. A veterinarian can also insert a microchip into your horse’s neck for permanent identification. Horses left outside should wear halters that will break away if caught on something. Fly masks could also be used to help protect the eyes from flying debris – just make sure they’ll also break away easily if they get caught on something.

Some of the biggest problems that we face from a hurricane occur after the storm has come and gone. Be prepared for downed fence lines and prolonged power outages. It might not hurt to have some temporary fencing stored away in case you need to replace a section of your fence line or confine your horses to a particular area in the pasture.

Bugs can become a big concern after the storm due to large amounts of standing water. It’s extremely important to be sure that your horses are up to date on their vaccinations. Eastern Equine Encephalomyelitis (EEE) and West Nile are a big concern in areas where mosquito populations are high. Horses in these areas should be vaccinated twice a year, six months apart.

Also be on the lookout for cyanide poisoning. This can be a possible problem if there are wilted leaves, twigs, bark or seeds from wild cherry trees (Prunus species) or also red maple leaves (Acer rubrum). Symptoms that your horse may be suffering from cyanide poisoning include weakness, excitability, difficulty breathing, lack of coordination, convulsions, constipation or diarrhea, and bloody urine. These symptoms may eventually result in death. Horses can become poisoned after eating as little as 1 to 2 cups of leaves on an empty stomach.

Most importantly, please just use good judgment! Don’t put your life or the lives of others at risk. Since Hurricane Floyd passed through in 1999 (can you believe it has been that long ago?), we’ve been relatively lucky and haven’t had any storms that have caused widespread damage in this state. Hopefully this year’s hurricane season won’t be the one to change that good luck streak. Prepare for the worst and hope for the best!

**FLY CONTROL TIPS**

Fly season is here and the swishing of horses’ tails and the grumbles of unhappy horse owners can be heard all over the area. Here are some tips that may help you control the flies in your area this season:

1. **Practice good sanitation!** The single most effective method of fly control is good sanitation around your barn area. Wet bedding and manure should be removed at least once a week from stalls and areas where horses often stand. During peak fly season, it is best to remove it at least once every 2-3 days in order to reduce fly breeding. Material that is removed should be land applied within a few days or composted. Composting areas should be covered and well drained. It’s also helpful to remove water buckets from stalls that are not in use. This keeps the water (especially water that has become dirty!) from becoming a breeding ground for flies and mosquitoes.

2. **Use methods of mechanical control!** Water traps (Terminator, Trap-N-Toss, etc) or sticky ribbons help reduce the need for pesticides. Hang these throughout the barn—one per every 1,000 square feet of area that flies may breed. Be sure that traps are hung in a way that they can be easily inspected and managed but are out of the way of traffic in the barn area. Water traps and ribbons will probably need to be cleaned and recharged/replaced about once every two weeks. If put in place early and maintained correctly, the traps and ribbons can be very effective in controlling flies.
3. **Pesticide Use:** Scatter baits containing methomyl (Apache or Blue Malrin) are very effective. The bait can be sprinkled in areas throughout the barn where flies tend to gather but where humans and animals won’t be at risk for exposure to the bait. Avoid sprinkling the bait under the horse’s feed trough or hayrack. It’s not likely that the horse would eat enough of the bait to become sick, but it’s better to be safe than sorry. The bait also works well when sprinkled over wet zones in the horse’s stall after these areas have been cleaned and covered with fresh bedding. Piperonyl buxide plus pyrethrum, a natural insecticide made from certain species of chrysanthemum flowers, is commonly used in fogging systems. Since it is non-residual, continuous misting or fogging about once a week may be needed during the peak fly season. Feed through insect growth regulators (IGR) are also available but must be fed continuously and to all horses in the barn for it to be most effective. The IGR prevents fly larvae from developing into adults but adult flies will continue to be a nuisance for several weeks after treatment has begun. Fortunately, this type of treatment has little or no effect on beneficial insects that might feed on flies in the barn.

4. **Biological control:** Parasitic wasps are effective in reducing the need for pesticides when used along with good sanitation practices. In fact, pesticides should not be used in areas where parasitic wasps have been released. Female wasps deposit eggs in fly pupae and when the wasp eggs hatch, the larvae consume the fly pupae from the inside out. Therefore a new wasp will emerge in about 14 days instead of a new fly. Contact the extension office for a list of suppliers for parasitic wasps.

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**FIREANT CONTROL IN HORSE PASTURES**

Fire ants can be a big nuisance within pastures and hayfields but they can also pose a danger to livestock and horses. Although we’re unable to completely rid ourselves of these pests, we can greatly decrease their populations and the risk to animals.

It’s important to understand the biology of a fire ant colony in order to understand how best to control them. Each colony contains a queen, who controls all of the activities of the colony and for whom all of the activity takes place. There can be thousands of worker ants within a colony whose sole purpose is to care for the queen and provide food for her while she continues to lay eggs and hatch more ants. So unless the queen is killed, the colony will continue to thrive.

The two types of treatments we have are contact poisons or baits. Contact poisons kill the ants when they come into contact with the insecticide and are fast acting. Baits are slow acting, and meant to be taken back into the mound as food, in hopes that the queen and other ants will feed off of the baits and die. The method of treatment you may use will depend on how badly your pastures are infested. If you have very few mounds, then you may want to use a contact poison,
such as carbaryl, or use baits around the individual mounds. If you have a widespread, heavy infestation, your best alternative will be to use a broadcast treatment in swaths across the pasture. By spacing the swaths approximately 20ft apart, you’ll gain the same level of effectiveness as if you’d broadcasted over the entire pasture, while only using half the amount of bait as required to broadcast a whole pasture.

When using baits on individual mounds, the key to success is not disturbing the ants during their routine activities. To make sure ants are actively foraging, place a potato chip or a ‘cheese-doodle’ near the mound and wait 20-30 minutes. If you see ants eating the chip, then you know they’re actively foraging and it’s a good time to put out bait. If not, it may be best to wait until another time to treat. They usually forage the most during the morning and late afternoon. Apply the bait in a circle around the individual mound without disturbing the mound itself. You want the ants to come out in search of food, find the bait, and take it back to the mound.

Products labeled for use in pastures and hayfields according to the 2009 NC Agricultural Chemicals Manual include fenoxycarb (Award), hydramethylnon (Amdro Pro or Seige Pro), methoprene (Extinguish), methoprene + hydramethylnon (Extinguish Plus), and pyriproxyfen (Esteem Ant Bait). It’s important to check the label of the product you choose to ensure that there is no recommended haying or grazing restriction associated with the use of that chemical. The use of kerosene or gasoline on fire and mounds is ineffective and highly discouraged due to the environmental hazards associated with dumping these materials into the soil. Pouring boiling water into the mound may be effective but can pose a burn hazard to humans.

Keep in mind that baits are slow acting and it may take up to 3 months for them to reach their highest level of effectiveness. Fire ant control is a continual process and not a one time event. Be patient and persistent and you’ll be successful in controlling these pests.

**Upcoming Events**

**JUNE**

13th – Coastal Carolina Saddle Club fun show – Barkers Farm, Vanceboro

13th – Coastal Classic EDCTSA dressage show – Wilmington

13th – Tarheel Horseman’s Association show – Onslow Pines Park, Jacksonville

13th -14th – Eastern Hunter Association – Ag Center, Williamston

26th – 4H District Activity Day – New Hanover County

**JULY**

8th -12th – State 4H Horse Show – Hunt Horse Complex, Raleigh

25th -26th – NCDCTA dressage show – Ag Center, Williamston

**INTRODUCING LARRY KENT**

My name is Larry Kent and as of March 2, 2009 I am the Program Assistant at your Onslow county Cooperative Extension Office. I will be working with both Dr. Diana Rashash in the Onslow County water quality-monitoring program and Mr. Jeff Morton in his horticulture program and as needed assisting other agents here in Onslow County.

Originally from Greenville, Michigan I have been associated with and/or living in Onslow County for the past number of years. Some of you may already know me as I have been working with the Onslow County Farmers’ Market as a volunteer for the past four years.

Agriculture is my passion. If there is anything I can do to help you, please feel free to contact me at 910-340-0009 or email me at: Larry_Kent@ncsu.edu. I look forward to working with each and all of you.