

3 Small Livestock Preparedness Tips



Raising small livestock is a good way to feed your family quality protein. Rabbits, chickens, ducks, and turkeys are some common additions to homestead operations. Meat goats might be another addition or possibly sheep. All of these animals require a small amount of routine maintenance and care daily but the labor and land required is still less than beef cattle, pigs or dairy cows. Although day to day life might not be a problem, there may be some occasions where you cannot care for your animals. These emergencies can occur out of the blue, or you may have some notice in order to get ready. Even though we can't always foresee natural disasters coming, there are some steps that we can take to make the transition from

daily routine, to emergency actions easier.

Illness is an emergency that we don't see coming. When a primary caretaker for the farm animals is taken ill, does anyone else know how to care for the animals? What if a family member needs your help and you have to ask a friend or neighbor to care for your farm during your absence. Can the substitute farmer step in and do the job?

In recent summers, the wild fires out in the north west section of the United States and Canada have taken the worst toll ever, as far as loss of property, equipment, livestock, and hay to feed the livestock through the winter. Many people had to evacuate and leave their livestock behind, stopping to open pens to let the animals run for their own lives. Others were able to load up trailers, vans, and crates with their barnyard animals and take refuge on a farm in another area. I live on the East coast and have never experienced forest fires like this. In our area, flash flooding is a more likely natural disaster. What ever possible disaster might occur in your region, your livestock should be considered in the emergency preparedness plan that is in place for your family.

I have come up with three focal points for a plan concerning your small livestock.

3 Small Livestock Preparedness Tips

1. Update vaccines, routine health care and have transportation ready.



Let's say it is possible for you to pack up your barnyard animals and take them to safety with you. Don't let your small livestock infect some other flock or herd if they open up barns or grazing land to you. Keep up with the health of your flocks and herds so that in an emergency, you can take them with you.

Have a crate ready for all small animals. Try some "fire drills" so you know how you would gather everyone up. Remember, the animals will pick up on your panic and react. Knowing where all the crates are stored ahead of time, making sure they are in good repair will save precious time.

Make sure your animals are used to being herded, handled or led by a lead rope. If the emergency event is the first time you try to get your sheep loaded into a trailer, it could be a disaster. All it takes is one animal to freak out and the

whole flock is running for cover.

2. Have a set routine and write it down

You most likely have a fairly set routine that you go through everyday when caring for the animals. Your small livestock are used to this and changing it abruptly can lead to stress. If you are suddenly called away for a health emergency, make it easier on the caretaker and your animals. Write down the routine and leave it somewhere in the barn or feed room. Having the written instructions will make your friend or family member more confident, during feeding time. If you have a goat that busts through the gate, at feeding time, but will return for food, write this down. It will save a lot of headache and turmoil.

3. Have storage of food and water



Loss of power is another consequence of natural disaster that we have endured for days on end as a result of a hurricane or powerful storm. We only have well water in our area so when there is no electricity, we have no running water. We have learned to store water at all times. Simply filling the water troughs when they reach half full, or filling our bathtub with clean water will get us through. Some times we also store bottled water for the humans and store jugs of extra water for the livestock.

The same is true for grain. When the [feed container](#) gets half empty, buy more. We would be able to feed our flocks and herds for a while with the grass and weeds. The change in diet, to only forage, after feeding grain and hay would be an adjustment for their digestive tract. Optimally, any changes should be done gradually. If a friend or family member had to

step in to care for our barnyard, I would hate to have no feed in the bins. In the event of a natural disaster you may not be able to travel to the feed store to buy more feed right away. If you always have a few days feed on hand, this will not be a worry for you.

Know What Type of Disaster is Common for Your Area

Each area of the world is different in what type of disasters might occur. None of us are immune to the possibility of a health crisis. I believe homesteading or farming is a healthy pursuit, full of many rewards and also many challenges. Keeping ahead of disasters by being as prepared as possible is a way to increase the odds of survival.



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[Chickens From Scratch](#)

