

As a livestock or horse owner, if you have not been here with animals during a powerful hurricane, you may not know how the utility and road infrastructures can shut down after a sizable storm leaving your operation without power, water, communications, or a safe route to or from your residence. Factor in the existing soil saturation and you should expect Florence to cause trees to fall and creeks to rise. For many rural residents, no power means means no well water for the family or the animals.

Horse owners, do you have access to 7-10 gallons of water per horse each day if you've lost power to the stable? You likely have enough forage and feed available to cover several days but will the water flow stop along with the electricity? A related consideration, can you navigate the network of roads closed by downed trees and power lines to reach that friend who can share water?

Goat and sheep producers, will your herd or flock be isolated on your property by high water? I recall one producer explaining how he/she had to swim a flooded stream to rescue goats stranded on a hill top (No that is not recommended.) Are you ready for predators if a charged perimeter fence fails. Hurricanes can be problematic for small ruminants and light weight shelters used as part of a rotational grazing program. For this storm, it is likely worth the time spent to move those animals before the rain starts and secure any plastic calf-hutches with an anchoring system. Fresh water is a consideration too for goats and sheep if the well pump loses power so filling a few troughs to draw from may serve you well.

Backyard Poultry Producers, think fresh water and where it will come from if you lose power for several days, 1/4 gallon per bird per day. Hurricanes bring winds that can easily topple a chicken tractor or send a coop rolling across the yard. Secure those shelters as best possible, look for loose boards and coverings that could stand new nails or screws. Some of you may be able to bring your birds indoors, a garage works well. Keep in mind though that if the storm is raging and you feel compelled to check on the girls, they are chickens - assign them an appropriate personal risk value if you're considering a wellness check.

Cattle Producers, you're likely among the best prepared livestock owners and most of you have seen a hurricane or two before. If not, move your animals from harm's way as best possible.

Hog Producers, Like other livestock owners, have adequate food and water available for several days. Pig shelters, like other small shelters, are susceptible to wind damage and possibly movement. Be ready to check enclosures at the first safe opportunity so as not to increase Virginia's feral hog population.

Everyone:

- Expect to lose power unless you have a UPS.
- Unlikely as it might seem in September, a woodstove could be the only heat source for cooking (and the firewood is wet)
- Anticipate that moving along roads will not be possible due to downed trees or high water.
- If the storm is particularly bad, multiple animals will be needing the Vet afterwards – so anticipate a waiting list and plan for euthanizing.
- Be ready to repair fences and open driveways, test your chainsaws, have new or sharp blades available.
- Have fence repair materials or stock panels ready.
- Top off the ATV and tractor fuel tanks.