

How to Care for Livestock in a SHTF Scenario

SHTF scenarios are hard to prepare for, but training beforehand is essential for protecting yourself and your family. Add animals to the mix and it gets even more complex. Your cows and sheep don't understand Category 5 hurricanes and EF5 tornadoes.

You may get lucky and have a few days to prepare for a significant natural disaster. Other SHTF situations won't be so kind with warnings. How should you prepare for an evacuation? What if a getaway isn't feasible? Here's how to prepare for SHTF scenarios with your livestock.

What Challenges Arise in Animal Evacuation?

Preparing yourself and your family is hard enough during SHTF scenarios, but a cow weighing over 1,000 pounds may be even harder. Farmers, ranchers and survivalists face challenges evacuating their animals in dangerous situations.

The first hardship you may face is livestock behavior. Animals, like humans, can easily face anxiety and panic when thrust into challenging scenarios. Thunderstorms and disasters put them under duress. Studies have shown that extreme weather events affect livestock health with heat stress, oxidative stress, and other issues.

Tensions can run high when SHTF scenarios arise. Time is of the essence in evacuating every animal from the disaster. Livestock is more intelligent than you think and can sense fear in humans. When you're scared, they can detect it. It's essential to handle your animals with care throughout the

process to limit obstacles in evacuation.

Another issue with evacuating your animals [is coordinating transportation](#). It's no secret that livestock can get heavy. Adult cattle can easily cross the 2,000-pound mark. Some people transport livestock to their land but don't have ways to evacuate them if necessary. Your transportation might not be adequate to get every animal to safety.

How Can You Prepare Animals for Evacuation?

Among the best ways to protect yourself and your animals is with evacuation. Leaving the premises may be your safest option if your area is prone to flooding or vulnerable during torrential weather. These four strategies will prepare your animals for a good escape.

Emergency Contacts

The first step in an evacuation plan is to gather your emergency contacts. You'll need phone numbers or email addresses from your family, neighbors, and friends. You'll benefit from having the emergency phone numbers of your veterinarians, animal shelter, animal control, and more. In addition, give your contact information to these people and anyone else involved in caring for your livestock.

Trailer

When it's time to evacuate, it's hard to load a cow on the back of your bugout vehicle and get away. You'll need something more substantial with stronger suspension. You can use a bugout vehicle as long as you're using it to haul a vessel like a trailer. The trailer you buy will vary depending on how many animals you have and their weights, [so do your homework](#) to determine what fits your needs.

The option that makes the most sense for livestock is a gooseneck trailer. These haulers are among the largest you'll see in noncommercial use and are comparable in size to what you'd see hooked to an 18-wheeler. The gooseneck's long arm hitches to the back of your truck, making it sturdy and stable for the long road ahead. Giving your large animals a smooth ride on a trailer will ease the trip despite unfortunate circumstances.

When buying a trailer, you'll need to consider how much your vehicle can tow. The towing capacity affects your fuel economy, top speed, and how much you can carry. If you use a gooseneck trailer, you'll need a towing capacity of at least 12,000 or up to 16,000 pounds.

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Identification

It's essential to identify every animal correctly when evacuating your livestock. There are two types of identification you can use: permanent and temporary. The temporary solution may be easier for a quick fix, but if you have time, consider using a permanent ID.

Microchips are highly effective because they're the easiest way to prove an animal belongs to you. They are about as tiny as rice and show your livestock's identification number when scanned. Another permanent identification is tattooing. This method is standard for livestock, and ranchers usually place the tattoo above the ear's first rib. Tattooing is beneficial because it doesn't alter the animal's appearance.

You could resort to temporary identification if you don't have access to either option. In a pinch, you can use nontoxic spray paint for your livestock. Ensure it's non-water-soluble if rain or floods are an issue. You can also use a livestock marking crayon to label each animal quickly. Other solutions

may include chalk, tags, and collars.

Practicing the Plan

Evacuating your animals can feel like Noah's Ark, whether you have a couple of cows or 30 animals to haul away. SHTF scenarios will give you little time to prepare, so you must be ready when the moment strikes. One way to get ahead of the curb is to practice ahead of time.

Give your evacuation plan a full practice run before disaster strikes. A simulation will allow you to work out the kinks in your armor. How can you make the evacuation more efficient? What were the struggle points? Did a particular group of animals not cooperate? It's hard to predict how livestock will react in these situations, so do at least one practice run to find the bugs.

What if You Need to Shelter in Place?

There may be limited or no emergency services readily available for your animals if you live in a rural area. Evacuation can protect your livestock, but that isn't always an option. Sometimes you have to shelter in place during SHTF scenarios. These five tips will help you stay safe on your property.

State Agriculture Department

If you know a disaster is coming, contact your state's agriculture department to see how it can help. If you can't evacuate your animals, the state may be able to send assistance your way. You can also reach out to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and apply for one of its disaster aid programs.

The USDA has an emergency assistance program for livestock that provides financial help. You can apply for the USDA to cover the costs of transporting feed for your livestock.

Alternate Power and Safe Water

Disastrous storms can knock out power grids for days or weeks, or a separate incident like a cyberattack can cut power with no warning at all. You'll need to find alternate energy and safe water sources.

At least one backup generator will significantly help your property stay powered. Some survivalists rely on technology to track livestock location, feeding schedules, and keeping milk at a proper temperature if you make dairy products. An outage would be devastating, so prepare your livestock with backup generators.

Another thing to focus on is finding alternative water sources. Heavy floodwaters often contain contaminants from sewage and animals that drink this water could quickly become ill from chemical contamination. Prevent them from drinking it and prepare with a stock of water ahead of time. Test it to ensure your animals will be safe when you provide water.

Native Trees

If you elect to leave animals outdoors, ensure the environment is safe for them to stay in while they brace for the SHTF scenario. One way to help them is to inspect your property for non-native trees. Native trees are preferable on any property for livestock protection because they're typically much more substantial. They've been in the environment for years or decades and have adapted to the climate.

Native trees also provide other benefits, like protecting nearby plants and saving water. Non-native trees can be invasive and steal nutrients like water from other plants.

Adapting to the climate helps trees survive harsh conditions. Find native trees for your livestock to take shelter under and steer them away from weaker non-native trees.

Removing Barbed Wiring

Barbed wiring has been a staple among farmers and ranchers for over a century. Its invention led to a soaring cattle industry in the late 19th century. However, it may be best to remove it in SHTF scenarios.

You may need to evacuate without your animals when a powerful storm comes. In this scenario, consider removing the barbed wire from your property. When flooding happens, your livestock will search for higher ground, or if hurricane-force winds come, they'll want to find low-lying areas. Though they may wander off, the animals will be better off without barbed wire on the property.

Building Safety

One critical decision you'll need to make is whether the livestock will stay inside or outside. You must ensure outdoor facilities are strong enough to withstand any SHTF scenario, especially a tornado or a hurricane. Good upgrades and preventive measures can be the difference in your animals' survival.

The first step is to inspect every building for weaknesses that a storm can exploit. Check the paddocks and barns, especially the roofs. There may be loose shingles or weak siding that will break easily during heavy storms. Keep pesticides and other fertilizers above ground so they don't become dangerous in floodwaters. You'll also need to protect your heavy machinery by securing it to the floor.



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Protecting Livestock in Any SHTF Scenario

A SHTF scenario can arise at any moment these days. A pandemic has already shown how bad things can get. The next disaster could be a Category 5 hurricane, economic collapse, or war.

In any circumstance, you need to consider how to protect your family and livestock. Losing your animals would be detrimental to any survivalists trying to sustain themselves. Take the proper measures to protect livestock, whether you evacuate or shelter in place.