



Caring for livestock after a wildfire

Like humans, livestock also face health risks from wildfires. Animals suffering pain, shock, and long-lasting complications from burns or inhaling smoke particles are concerns for livestock owners.

PRECAUTIONS WHEN A WILDFIRE TAKES PLACE ON YOUR PROPERTY

- Stay out of damaged barns and buildings and return to your property only when authorities permit you to.
- Notify DEQ or your local fire department if you believe that hazardous materials were released in the fire or during fire fighting. Place warning signs on contaminated areas.
- When disposing of some materials, such as those potentially contaminated with chemicals, check with DEQ for state and local requirements for disposal procedures.
- Keep livestock away from contaminated feed and water.
- Wear protective gear including steel-toed boots, a hard hat, respiratory protection, gloves and other protective clothing when entering contaminated areas and when in damaged barns and buildings.
- Before entering a barn or building, assess the true integrity of the structure. Always turn off the electrical power, gas lines, and other utilities until a thorough safety inspection is made.
- If the decision is made to demolish a building, hire a professional. Professionals will be able to do the job more efficiently and safely.
- Check with your insurance provider so you know what is covered by wildfires. Take pictures of all damage, and inventory all damaged structures, supplies, equipment and machinery. Save receipts for expenses relating to fire loss.

CARING FOR LIVESTOCK AFFECTED BY SMOKE OR FIRE

- Limit exercise. Don't force livestock to perform strenuous activities that put stress on their lungs.
- Provide plenty of fresh water. Keep water near feeding areas. Drinking maintains moist airways and helps breathing. This allows the windpipe and large and small airways to remove smoke particles and prevent disease.
- Sprinkle or mist livestock holding areas and provide low-dust or dust-free feeds. This limits dust exposure and reduces particulate matter.
- Provide recovery time. Airway damage from wildfire smoke can take several weeks. Allow livestock time to recuperate. Handling or transporting animals can worsen their condition.
- Daily reassessment of each and every burned animal is extremely important.
- The condition of an animal that has been burned or exposed to smoke can change drastically in the days and weeks following a wildfire. Some damage might not be evident upon initial inspection.
- Please consult with your veterinarian to discuss pain relief options.



WORK WITH YOUR VETERINARIAN TO HELP YOU TRIAGE INJURED ANIMALS

- Severely burned animals experiencing skin damage and shock may need to be euthanized. Emergency euthanasia options include captive bolt gun, firearm gunshot (laws and regulations may apply), or barbiturate overdose from a veterinarian.
- Burned areas of skin become leather-like and slough off in the first few weeks post-burn. Keep wounds clean while maintaining minimal contact.
- Keep track of feeding habits. Not eating, or going off-feed, is an indicator of possible pain or sickness.
- Pulmonary edema (fluid in the lungs) can occur. Livestock that has inhaled hot gases may have a cough and frothy material discharging from the nose or mouth. If you see these symptoms in your animals, contact your veterinarian immediately.
- Examine animals carefully. The depth and severity of burns may be difficult to see, especially if the animal does not appear pained. It is possible for burns to destroy nerve endings, meaning the animal may not show signs of pain despite severe tissue damage.
- Check animals' progress daily. Burn injuries may worsen for up to six (6) weeks following injury.

DOCUMENT LIVESTOCK AND CROP LOSSES

- Take pictures of dead livestock where they lay.
- Document the location of livestock where they are found.
- Federal assistance related to wildfire losses may be available depending on the scope of the incident. More information is available from your local extension agent or FSA office. A factsheet is available online at <https://oda.fyi/FSADisasterAssistance>
- State FSA offices can be found at <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices>

DISPOSE OF LIVESTOCK MORTALITIES APPROPRIATELY

ODA has several resources available to livestock owners with information on safely and legally disposing of livestock carcasses. A guide to safe and legal disposal of animal carcasses is available from ODA online at <https://oda.direct/SafeAnimalDisposal>.

A list of licensed animal disposal haulers in Oregon is available at <https://oda.direct/AnimalHaulers>.

- Direct burial of carcasses – appropriate for small numbers of carcasses
- Composting – composting of carcasses requires a composting plan with ODA, and a permit from DEQ. More information is available in ODA's carcass management guide linked above.
- Landfill – certain landfills are allowed to take carcasses as well as butchering waste. A list is available at <https://oda.direct/Landfills>
- Incineration - Animal mortalities and byproducts can be incinerated in a DEQ-approved incinerator or cremation unit.
- Open Burning – Open burning of animal carcasses and byproducts is not allowed

If you have experienced large numbers of mortalities and are unable to make disposal arrangements with your local landfill or hauling service, please contact the Oregon Department of Agriculture at (503) 986-4550.