



## **Disaster and Fire Season Precautions and Planning** *by Jessica Lynn*

With all of us witnessing the horror in Oklahoma in the past weeks and hurricane season starting in the Gulf, I felt compelled to share this just one more time as a reminder that many people never thought it could happen to them, and it did!

In California we often do not have the benefit of knowing that we are facing a natural disaster, with the advantage of a time frame to evacuate like those in the Midwest and in the Gulf for tornadoes or hurricanes ... earthquakes and fires just happen with no notice here, and with fires we may only have 15 minutes to grab our things, load our horses and be out!

Having been through one of the worst fires in Southern California history (2007) and the Cedar Fires before that, and also through the Elfin Forest/ La Costa fires almost 15 years ago now, I am **very** aware of what needs to be done in preparation for fire season, and because of the recent fires in the Los Angeles area and a few small earthquakes in the past few days, along the San Andreas fault, it makes me realize that I need to stay prepared in the event of an unplanned catastrophic incident.

**Trailer train your horses** (I cannot stress this one enough) so they will get in no matter what and right away, even if you don't have a trailer of your own. Borrow one, rent one, but get it done - if your horses have to be evacuated, by someone other than yourself, the emergency evacuation volunteers will only give each horse a maximum 10-15 minutes to get in and they will go to the next horse, leaving yours behind because you had not taken the time to get him to load! Many, **many** people in the Paradise fires had never gotten around to trailer loading and lost their animals in the fire simply because they would not get in and they were left behind! ***Trailer train your horses!!!!*** Again, I can't stress that enough - so many people in the past fires wished they had, when it was too late, and too many horses were lost or died that shouldn't have, if only their owners had taken the time to trailer train them!



*Trailer train your horses. It IS a matter of life and death in an emergency evacuation!*

**For Your Horses:**

Use a leather halter with cotton lead rope when evacuating, with a metal ID tag with their name and your cell phone number or contact number, or use EquistraSafe fetlock bands if they are going to an evacuation center (the reason I say *leather* is that during a fire a nylon halter can melt on your horse's face causing severe burns and disfiguration if he were to get loose). The name tag is for easy identification and they can be purchased at most pet stores and some places online.

**Hay Nets:** Fill a hay net for each horse; it is easier to transport than bales of hay especially if you have limited space to haul items. A good hay net can hold more than 25 pounds of feed, enough to get you through until you can get your horses settled. Fill one for each horse you are evacuating.

**Water:** Bring at least a 5-gallon jug of water for your horses, (and buckets); at least you will have enough for wherever you are going and can make arrangements for more.

**Buckets:** I bring 1 blue and 1 green large rope handle bucket for each horse, one for food and one for water.

**Supplements and Medications:** Bag up, in zip-lock bags, at least 7 days worth of supplements along with medications your horse(s) may be taking. I know with my 11-year-old who is on a special diet and has special supplements for a medical condition that she would get very sick without her “goolosh bags”! Don’t forget to bring the bucket or bowl you mix these feeds in or have a spare in your trailer.

**Equine/ Small Animal First Aid Kit:** I always carry mine in the trailer anyway, but it is great to have gauze, vet wrap, items to treat scratches and cuts - also betadine, biozide, and any other first aid items that you usually keep on hand at home including Traumeel (tablets, crème, etc.) and a homeopathic first aid kit too if you use one.

Also include Rescue Remedy and any flower essences or essential oils that will help to calm your horse (and you!), or other people's horses, during an evacuation. Other items of value, if you use them, would be 'bute' or 'Banamine' along with syringes and needles, or in the paste forms, in the event that your or another person's horse would need them during any emergency when there may be no vet available to get any. You might want to include a supply of probiotics and digestive enzymes/ aids to help prevent colic or colic-like symptoms due to the stress of evacuation and/or change in feed stuff.

**Gear:** If you have time and space, saddles, bridles, blankets, et al.

### **Additional Equine Tips:**

**The safest place** for your horses in the event of fire if you have to evacuate without them is in an arena or their own “dry lot” pasture, that has no incendiary brush or tree limbs in or hanging over it. Around here the horses that were left behind **and** that survived were the ones the owners **did not** turn loose, but left them in their own pasture, or arena, some with a sprinkler turned on and water troughs full along with a bale or two of hay (strings removed) in the middle depending upon the number of horses.

In the case of tornadoes maybe if the horses had been turned loose they could have outrun them, in the case of hurricanes hopefully barns are made of block and can withstand the winds, but maybe not the flooding after, which was the case in Hurricane Katrina, some horses were standing chest deep in their stalls waiting rescue.

**Do not turn your horse(s) loose** with a halter on; instead, if you have to turn them loose, braid an ID tag (like a leather luggage tag) into their manes, or use a permanent black waterproof marker to put your phone number (preferably cell phone or contact number in the event of emergency) on their butts or hip, as they could end up anywhere during an evacuation and people could then try to contact you. Others have suggested a piece of duct tape with your phone number or contact number on it placed on their butts, but I don't know if it would work (may not stick or stay on). I have the EquistraSafe fetlock bands for my horses which Velcro on and have my cell phone number embroidered on them.

**Board Facilities/Training Facilities:** Owner's who do not have their horses at home need to encourage the places where they stable their horses to have an evacuation/disaster preparedness plan. The facilities close to my home have them in place, owners know where their horses will be taken in the event of evacuation, they also have people to call, and they have a plan to trailer horses out as well in the event the owner cannot get there for whatever reason to get their horse (s) out. My friend Sally who owns Tapestry Meadows also offers seminars on trailer training, where they have several types of trailers hooked up and everyone who boards with her knows their horses will get in to whatever trailer is available to get them out!

### **A reminder:**

*Always keep at least a half tank of gas at all times in the tow vehicle, and make sure that vehicle has regular maintenance and your trailer is ready and accessible to hook up.*

*Now is the time to check that your trailer is in good order, air in tires, floors checked for wear and welds, and make sure brakes have been checked, etc., also that your brake box is working.*

### **Small Animals (Cats, Dogs and Other Pets):**

- Leather collars with ID tags and leashes
- Carriers for small animals, especially cats
- Two weeks worth of dry and/or wet food (I keep supplies in my horse trailer during this time of year so I don't have to worry about grabbing food and or other animal supplies; all I have to worry about are getting the animals in.
- A makeshift litter tray and cat litter (disposable aluminum roasting pans work great!)
- A hand can opener
- Assorted bowls and plastic dishes and a small bucket for water
- A blanket or two, or towels to cover the carriers or for your pets to sleep on and remember to bring your pets favorite bed.

If you have several small animals that all get along then a large collapsible crate if you have room so they are more comfortable.

If for some reason you cannot take your small pets, make sure they have collars with ID tags as well as at least 2 weeks of water and food. I would not recommend leaving any animal if the disaster was a fire or flood, as their chance of survival would be minimal. Make friends with your neighbors; someone in your neighborhood might be able to get your animals out if they know you have them and if you cannot get home to get them yourself. What you find during disasters is that people want to help if they can, especially with rescuing animals. Make sure a trusted neighbor has a key to your house so they could get in to get your pets if you are not home or not able to get home.

Also have a sign in the window or posted on a front door as to how many pets your have inside and if they are cats, dogs, iguanas, parrots, or whatever, so that rescue people will know there are pets to rescue, or in the alternative leave a sign showing that your pets have been evacuated. Pets will hide during a disaster and rescuers may not know they are there - unless you have a sign posted, they won't know to look for them, lessening their chances of survival.

### **People Things:**

HAVE AN EVACUATION/DISASTER PLAN AND A PERSON NOT IN THE AREA FOR ALL FAMILY MEMBERS TO PHONE TO CHECK IN WITH.

\*\* Cell phone and cell phone chargers (cigarette lighter and wall - this is the one thing several of my friends forgot and their phones went dead and we could not reach them for two days to see if they needed help)

\* Family photos and albums, as well as other irreplaceable items

\* Insurance papers and important business and family documents

\* A back-up disk for your computer (back up regularly so you won't lose any important data, or only a small amount)

\* Travel kit with toiletries (called comfort kits)

\* Change of clothes

\* Sleeping bags and pillows

\* Photos and registration papers of horses, and other pets (keep a copy of these in your glove box of your evacuation vehicle)

\* Bottled water - enough for 3-5 days

\* Power bars, breakfast bars, granola bars or healthy non-perishable snack food

\* People First Aid Kit - Again, whatever you would normally have in a first aid kit at home including band-aids, ointments and any homeopathic remedies along with aspirin and other analgesics (see below).

\* Cash - as in the real green-backs. As many have learned the hard way, ATM's do not work if there is no power so you cannot get any money out, nor can you make credit card purchases for gas/fuel or other needed items. Always have a small amount (\$100.00 +) stashed in your wallet or somewhere easily accessible because during an evacuation and disaster money does talk and you may just need to use it for something necessary that you cannot get with electronic cards.

### **Flashlight**

Use the flashlight to find your way if the power is out. Do not use candles or any other open flame for emergency lighting.

### **Battery-powered Radio**

News about the emergency may change rapidly as events unfold. You also will be concerned about family and friends in the area. Radio reports will give information about the areas most affected.

### **Plastic Sheeting and Duct Tape**

Use the plastic sheeting and duct tape for sheltering-in-place verses evacuation.

### **Food**

Enough non-perishable food to sustain you for at least one day (three meals), but better to have at least 3 days available, if close to a workplace with stored food or three day supply if at home or other location, is suggested. Select foods that require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking, and little or no water. The following items are suggested:

- Ready-to-eat canned meals, meats, fruits, and vegetables;
- Canned juices; and
- High-energy foods (granola bars, energy bars, etc.)
- Almonds and or other nuts for protein
- Dried fruits, etc.

### **Water**

Keep at least one gallon of water available, per person in your household. That would be a minimum of 3 gallons for three days per person, at minimum, or more if you are on medications that require water or that increase thirst. Store water in plastic containers such as soft drink bottles, or the large 5 gallon jugs you can purchase at Walmart. Avoid using containers that will decompose or break, such as milk cartons or glass bottles.

### **Over the Counter Medications/ Prescription drugs**

Include usual non-prescription medications that you take, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, etc. If you use prescription medications, keep at least three-day's supply of these medications at your workplace. Consult with your physician or pharmacist how these medications should be stored, and your employer about storage concerns. Especially those with diabetes or other diseases that require constant monitoring and meds, need to be mindful to have a supply handy at work or to grab in the event of evacuation.

### **First Aid Supplies**

Have the following essentials in your car or in your Disaster Preparedness kit

- Absorbent Compress 5x9 Dressing
- Adhesive Bandages (Assorted Sizes)
- Adhesive Cloth Tape 5 yds/1"
- Antibiotic Ointment Packets (approx 1g)
- Antiseptic Wipe Packets
- Wet wipes
- Packets of Aspirin (162mg)
- Pair of Non-Latex Gloves (Size Large)
- Scissors
- Rolled Bandage 3"
- Sterile Gauze Pads 3x3
- First Aid Instruction Information
- Any other common first aid supplies your family may use
- A homeopathic first aid kit

### **Additional Tools and Supplies to Include in Your Emergency Preparedness Kit (1-or 3-day)**

- Paper plates and cups, plastic utensils
- Baby diapers and other baby supplies
- Non-electric can opener
- Personal hygiene items, including a toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, brush, soap, toilet tissue, contact lens supplies, and feminine supplies
- Plastic garbage bags, ties (for personal sanitation uses)
- Include at least one complete change of clothing and footwear, including a long sleeved shirt and long pants, as well as closed-toed shoes or boots, and a jacket or two, or hooded sweat shirt.
- If you wear glasses, keep an extra pair with your workplace disaster supplies.

You can keep all the above in a sealed garbage can or two in your garage, storage shed or other safe place that you could get to in the event of an emergency or disaster.

### **Final Tips:**

More importantly, and most of all be prepared, be calm and help your neighbors if you can in the event of evacuation. Get their work numbers and share yours, have a neighborhood phone list with emergency numbers and cell phone numbers. Have a key to your truck and trailer hidden in a safe place that one of your neighbors knows about. If they have time, they can maybe help get your animals out if you aren't there. Have neighborhood meetings on disaster preparedness. We do, and everyone in our neighborhood has a plan. We have a central staging area, we have emergency supplies and 5,000 gallons of well water storage. We also make sure we have two weeks extra worth of hay stored at all times, enough dog and cat food for two weeks, and

enough dry food for several people, just in case - and propane to cook with, candles, matches, and extra batteries.

Your area, be it county, city or state, probably has Disaster Preparedness plans online or they can mail them to you for more complete information and suggestions. The Red Cross would also be another source for written info to be prepared for a disaster such as fires.

Take care of your horses, cats, dogs and other animals, but more importantly take care of yourself! Get your valuables and get out - your life is not worth trying to save material things that can be replaced - your life cannot, and your family will be devastated! Everything you have is replaceable except your family and your animals!

*About the author:*

Jessica Lynn is the owner of Earth Song Ranch, a California licensed natural feed supplement business specializing in designing, manufacturing and distributing natural equine, canine and feline nutritional supplements. Earth Song Ranch also offers blends with wild crafted and organic herbs, herbal wormers, homeopathic remedies, nosodes, and educational articles. Jessica has been involved in holistic and alternative health for humans and animals for well over 4 decades. Please visit the Earth Song Ranch web site at [www.earthsongranch.com](http://www.earthsongranch.com). Jessica Lynn, [jessica@earthsongranch.com](mailto:jessica@earthsongranch.com) 951-514-9700