

Animal Health Information for Dairy Producers Affected by Floods

Mitigation for Flooding Effects on the Farm

Preparing for a Flood or Flash Flood on Your Farm

Create an emergency plan of action, considering such things as areas of high ground for animal relocation, temporary milking facilities, equipment relocation, and safe pesticide storage.

- Be sure cattle are properly immunized before being exposed to floodwaters.
- Make arrangements for emergency milk pickup.
- Have a plan for moving grain out of the reach of floodwaters.
- In broad, level floodplains where floodwaters are seldom deeper than 3 or 4 feet, a mound of soil can be constructed on which livestock can stay until floodwaters recede. Try to locate the mounds where they will not be washed away by fast flowing water.
- Provide riprap on banks of earthen manure storages where flowing water may erode berms.

When a Flood or Flash Flood Watch or Warning Is Issued

- Move machinery, feed, grain, pesticides, and herbicides to a higher elevation.
- Tie down lumber, logs, irrigation pipes, fuel tanks, and other loose equipment or materials.
- To keep surface water out of your well, use such materials as heavy plastic and duct tape to seal the well cap and top of well casing.
- Disconnect electric power to all buildings that may be flooded.

During a Flood or Flash Flood Event

- If water is rising, try to drive stock through water free of obstructions. Grazing animals swim well, except when they encounter fences and swift currents.
- Block off narrow passageways where animals would be unable to turn around.

- Leave building doors and windows open at least 2 inches to equalize pressure and help prevent buildings from shifting.
- Provide feed and water to livestock. If water is not provided, thirsty animals will try to break out to get to floodwaters.

After the Flood

Cattle affected by floods require some extra special care and attention as dairy farmers try to resume their routine. Once cows' calorie, water and shelter needs are met, new animal health issues are likely to pop up in the herd.

Environmental Mastitis Will Become an Important Problem to Pay Attention To

- Retrain milkers to do a good job of prepping the cows before milking, making sure that udders and teats are clean and dry before milking.
- Continue with your winter-time post-milking dipping procedures.
- Make sure you and your milkers are identifying cases of clinical mastitis early so that cows can be treated early. Look for flakes, clots, watery milk, or hard or swollen quarters at each milking.
- Take a milk sample before treating cases of mastitis with intramammary tubes. You can submit the fresh sample to your veterinarian for culture or freeze the sample, depending on your normal culture protocol.
- If the mastitis does not clear, make sure you know what the cause was -- Serratia, Pseudomonas and other uncommon and hard-to-treat causes of mastitis can be associated with dirty water.



Herds Should be Vaccinated with Clostridial Vaccines

Booster the cows with a 7-way or 8-way or start on a Clostridial vaccination program with your veterinarian.

There are three main Clostridial disease problems we try to prevent: Blackleg, Malignant Edema, and Redwater.

All of these diseases result in the rapid death of affected cattle. Even if the animals are observed to be ill, treatment is often unsuccessful. (For a description and pictures of lesions of many cattle diseases -- go to the FAO website:

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/t0756e/T0756E03.htm>

Leptospirosis May Become a Problem with all the Standing water

Make sure your cows are up-to-date with their Lepto vaccinations. Leptospirosis can cause clinical disease in cows as well as abortions.



Indigestion is Likely in Cows that Have Been Off-Feed and then Put Back onto Lactating Rations.

Anytime cows change their diets rapidly, they are likely to develop indigestion, rumen acidosis, or even a displaced abomasum (DA). Keep a close watch on cattle as they come back onto feed and try to increase concentrate feeding slowly if at all possible.

Disease Introduction Could Become an Issue with Comingled Herds

Cows from different herds that are comingled because of flooding could be harboring contagious diseases such as Mycoplasma mastitis, Salmonella, BVD, Staph aureus or Johnes disease. Check the condition of the cattle returning to the farm and discuss testing or monitoring for contagious diseases with a veterinarian.

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