

If you've been in the cattle business anytime at all, you've probably been amazed at the predicaments bovines can get themselves into. And that's just in everyday life. Add a truck and trailer wreck or a natural disaster like a flood or tornado and you have, well, a disaster.

Melbourne, Ky., cattleman and volunteer firefighter Bob Schack says, "A couple of years ago we had a guy lose seven cows. They fell through the ice in the pond, and the firefighters didn't know what to do."

A couple of muddy winters in northern Kentucky also created emergency situations when cattle and horses found themselves stuck in mud. As a result, horse lovers, cattle producers, Extension agents and emergency workers banded together to conduct and participate in an intensive three-day training session for large-animal emergency rescue this past spring. More than 60 participants completed the course.

"We had more applicants than we had space," says Boone County Extension agent and cattle producer Jerry Brown.

Tomas and Rebecca Gimenez of Technical Large Animal Rescue conducted the training. The South Carolina

Funding large-animal rescue

Northern Kentucky agricultural Extension agents Don Sorrell and Jerry Brown both say area horse owners get a great deal of the credit for funding the emergency large-animal training in their part of the state, primarily from the Northern Kentucky Horse Network. In addition, a \$4,000 grant came from the Kentucky Equine Education Project (KEEP).

Money for the training also came from the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service offices in Boone, Kenton and Campbell counties; the Farm Bureau offices in the same counties; the Campbell County Conservation District; the Northern Kentucky Cattle Association; and the Campbell County Cattle Association.

In all, \$10,000 was raised for the training. What wasn't needed for putting on the three-day workshop was used to buy equipment for large-animal rescues in the area.

Editor's Note: For more information on large-animal rescue, visit www.tlaec.org, the web site of Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue, Tomas and Rebecca Gimenez.

husband-and-wife team brought their own horses and llama for demonstrations, both on land and in water.

The couple had a surprising solution for one of the more common cattle predicaments. If a bovine is stuck in mud, add water before trying to pull it out.

"If you've ever been stuck in mud while you're wearing rubber boots, think how it feels," says Campbell County Extension agent

Don Sorrell. "You can injure the animal trying to pull against that suction. When you add water, it releases the suction and it isn't as hard a pull."

The main take-home message for the participants, though, was stop and think.

"The two main objectives are to protect the animal and protect the people trying to rescue the animal," Brown says.

"The first instinct is to free the animal," Sorrell says. "But first, ask if the rescue can be done safely for the

rescuer. Evaluate the situation."

If it isn't a simple, safe, straightforward rescue you can

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"In the end, you have a system that will work, but you hope you don't have to use it."

— Don Sorrell



9-1-1 for Cattle

Consider safety, be prepared and be willing to ask for help.

by **Becky Mills**

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handle on your own, call 9-1-1. Now, in northern Kentucky, the commander of the first responder team will quickly analyze the situation and decide if he or she needs to call in the special large-animal rescue squad.

“We have a truck with the equipment, the ropes and pulleys, and slings,” Brown says. “Knowing how and what equipment to use is a big advantage. They can use the techniques and equipment to keep from injuring the animal worse.”

This equipment is set aside for animals. “Once it’s used for animal rescues, it can’t be used ever again for human rescues because of the contamination [issue],” Sorrell says.

Getting back to the rescue itself, Sorrell adds that one of the first calls may be to the local large-animal veterinarian to sedate the animal to keep it from getting hurt worse from struggling. “Or, the situation may be so grim the best solution may be to euthanize the animal,” he says.

As a result of the training, Brown, Sorrell and Schack say other community members are being added to the on-call team for large-animal rescuers. Livestock owners with portable corral panels and trailers can provide transportation in emergencies. The fairground manager, the manager of the local stockyard, and livestock producers who are willing to house and/or quarantine

animals during disasters are also available. In addition, large-equipment operators are on the team for times when a farm tractor isn’t sufficient for the rescue.

“We now have access to a lift, on a moment’s notice, that can reach out over a pond,” Schack says.

Still, he and the other participants in the course hope their knowledge, and the equipment, doesn’t have to be put to use. “In the end, you have a system that will work, but you hope you don’t have to use it,” Sorrell says.



Think ahead

The Boy Scout motto of “Be prepared” is perfect for disasters. Here is a list, courtesy of the American Red Cross web site, of chores and materials to have on hand before disaster strikes:

Reduce hazards

- ▶ Maintain a firebreak around all buildings.
- ▶ Mow weeds and trim trees that reside close to any buildings.
- ▶ Regularly clean roofs and gutters.
- ▶ Repair exposed wires, rotten supports and blocked waterways.
- ▶ Post “No Smoking” signs.
- ▶ Clearly label all shut-offs.
- ▶ Store combustibles such as hay, straw, wood, shavings and/or gasoline away from animal barns.
- ▶ Remove overhanging trees that may fall on animals or buildings.
- ▶ Keep an adequate water source.

Identify your pet

Keep animal vaccinations current and keep photographs, papers

and other identifying documents in a safe and easily accessible location. Brand, tag, freeze marking, tattoo or implant your animals with a permanent microchip identification (ID).

Prepare a disaster kit

Successful disaster preparedness depends on knowing where emergency equipment is stored and keeping it easily accessible. Your facility should be equipped with a ladder(s) long enough to reach the roof, cotton ropes, shovels, rakes, water buckets, flashlights or lanterns, blankets and a minimum of 100 feet (ft.) of hose. Restraining equipment such as cotton halters, cotton lead ropes, collars, whips, Hot Shots[®] hog snares, blindfolds, fence panels and hot wire kits are also a must in an emergency. Have an adequate, portable first-aid kit and a battery-powered radio ready at all times.

Editor's Note: *This information was prepared by the Animal Rescue Council, Marin Humane Society, 171 Bel Marin Keys Boulevard, Novato, CA 94949.*