

FARM & RANCH SAFETY IN COLD & WET WEATHER

Happy New Year!

Thank you, Sonoma-Marín Farm News, for inviting us to write a monthly column about farm & ranch safety.

The HALTER Project is dedicated to helping our rural community, (farmers, ranchers, dairymen and women, equestrians, wool growers, backyard livestock owners, and their neighbors) be better prepared and ready for whatever comes our way.

There are tremendous resources available to commercial ag businesses, but keep in mind that "backyard" and small farmstead operators may not always be aware of how and where to obtain info. A good start: your local Farm Bureau, UC Cooperative Extension, and our regional Resource Conservation Districts.

A wealth of experts have agreed to be contributors, sharing their knowledge and resources with us, and you. If there's a topic you're interested in, or YOU have knowledge to share, please get in touch!!

YAY!! It's RAINING! We're all keeping eyes on creeks, runoff, mud, and all that goes along with heavy rain and high winds. I awoke before dawn this morning to the dreaded sound of "CRAAACK!"--a big old oak crashing into a horse shelter. Fortunately, no one was IN that pasture. But, it reinforced my resolve to do some things around the house and ranch.

Mud Alert! Mud poses big hazards for farm animals. An animal stuck in deep mud can be seriously compromised in a very short time. Extracting an animal from mud can often cause serious injury if not handled properly.

Fortunately, here in Sonoma and Marin, we have several local fire resources that have TECHNICAL RESCUE skills and are ready and willing to help. In an animal-mud emergency, call Sonoma County Animal Services, or 911, and explain the situation. Skilled Help is nearby!!

Here's a checklist of items we're not always on top of. We've included several excellent links for detailed and complete information, too.

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- Keep an eye on trees near structures, fuel tanks, pastures and pens
- Move animals, when possible, to safest locations
- Stage vehicles in clearings-- note which way vulnerable trees can fall!

- Store all feed in watertight containers and off the ground
- Make sure chemicals, fuel, medications, large batteries are all stored in high areas, away from potential floodwater and runoff
- Check backup generators, cables, fuel supply
- Check for CATS under the HOOD of vehicles before starting!
- Check for leaking anti-freeze--put sand or cat litter under vehicles to absorb
- Check your supply of grounded cables
- Check old corrugated metal siding & roofing--loose material flapping in wind can spook animals. Flying or falling metal causes many injuries.
- If using heat lamps or other warming devices, check sockets, wiring, backup bulbs. Don't leave unattended. Check area beneath for paper, tarps, and cartons.
- Make YOUNG DRIVERS SAFE drivers!! Many new, young CA drivers have not experienced muddy, slick, loose gravel, and other wet-weather conditions. Run them through safety checks on trucks, tractors, ATVs, etc.

Visit these great links! Thank you to contributors: Michael Payne, DVM; Stephanie Larson, UCCE; Karen Giovannini, UCCE

- [Flooding & Livestock Owners - Preparing, Responding, and Recovering](#)
- [UCD School of Veterinary Medicine - Flood Safety for Equine Owners](#)
- [Cal/EPA – Storm Water Program](#)
- [Water Quality Compliance Program – Region 1 \(Pacific Ocean Watershed\)](#)
- [Water Quality Compliance Program – Region 2 \(SF Bay Watershed\)](#)