EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FOR WILDFIRES

- **Stock water**: Fill every available bucket, trough, and other container with enough water to accommodate animals for between five and seven days.

- **Stock feed**: Horses sheltered in place should have enough feed to accommodate them for between five and seven days.

- **Gather hand tools**: Have metal shovels and heavy-duty metal rakes on hand to extinguish cinders that might fall onto your property. Wind can carry cinders as far as a quarter mile. Hand tools are the best way to extinguish them.

- **Gather equine identification information**: Owners will need definitive identification to reclaim animals displaced during a wildfire event or other disaster from animal control or welfare authorities.

- **Mark your animals**: Animals should also be marked with the owner’s name and contact information. Owners can use indelible markers to write this information on horses’ hooves, or on duct tape placed on the horses’ neck or buttocks.

- **Mark your property**: Place placards on property fence gates informing firefighters that animals are being sheltered in place there. Owners should also include their names and contact information.

- **Remove horses from barns**: Horses should be relocated from barns even if those structures are equipped with sprinkler systems. Paddocks or metal-construction areas provide safer shelter. Close up the barn to prevent scared horses from running back inside and becoming trapped.

- **Be alert to signs of smoke inhalation**: Along with risk of lacerations and other injuries, horses sheltered in place run the risk of smoke inhalation. Owners should be able to recognize signs that their horses have inhaled smoke. If you see soot around your horse’s eyes or coming out of its nose, that horse has been breathing smoke.

Risk of smoke inhalation could last up to 30 days after fires have been extinguished. Left untreated, smoke inhalation can have long-term consequences including lung cancer in horses. Veterinarians treat smoke inhalation with antibiotics, as well as drugs that dilate airways and steroid drugs that reduce tissue inflammation.

If owners find their horses coughing, sneezing, or breathing more heavily than usual, they should seek treatment as soon as possible.

Owners residing in wildfire-prone areas reduce fire-damage risks by creating so-called “defensible spaces” around their properties. Defensible spaces are 100-foot perimeters that surround barns, paddocks, homes, and other structures. These spaces are devoid of overgrown brush, flammable chemicals, or trees that could fuel cinders emanating from wildfires.

If you have a defensible space, be sure your horses are paced within it if you have to shelter in place.