



Emergency Flooding Advisory: Tulare & Central Valley Counties

March 17, 2023

Guidance on Evacuation, Mortalities and Recovery

The following information has been provided from a variety of organizations including CDFA, USDA, dairy trade groups, and rendering companies. It represents our best understanding of current recommendations, but these may change without notice.

Summary

- The current storm patterns have caused historic flooding throughout the state, resulting in forced evacuation of dairies and property damage, including catastrophic feed losses.
- Most transportation needs for evacuating livestock has been organized by dairy trade organizations. State and federal resources are available.
- CDFA and county milk inspection agencies are providing expedited equipment inspection for producers that are evacuating to an empty dairy or who are returning home.
- Water Board staff requests that producers notify them of evacuation, to answer citizen and media questions with reassurance about water protection efforts.
- Significant increases in livestock mortality has not been reported, but flooding and road closures may delay routine pickups. Resources are available.
- Recovery funding will be available. Producers should begin documentation of disaster related expenditures immediately.
- CDQAP has produced a number of flood-related references and checklists.

Background

The most recent set of storms has resulted in historic flooding throughout the state, particularly in [the Central Valley](#). Evacuation orders have been issued for portions of numerous counties including Fresno, Kern, Madera, Merced, San Bernardino, San Luis Obispo and [Tulare](#). Trade groups are reporting that numerous facilities have been forced to evacuate youngstock and milking cows. Damage to property has been reported, including catastrophic loss of feed stores. A number of calf ranches have been similarly affected. Proclamations of a *State of Emergency* have been issued from the [federal government](#), the [Governor's Office](#) and numerous counties. With the prediction of additional rainfall this weekend, the potential for continued or worsening flooding exists.

Evacuations & Dairy Repopulation

Livestock Transportation – For producers requiring evacuations, for the most part trade organizations and processors have organized trailers from neighboring producers. If adequate local resources are not sufficient, the State Veterinarian, Dr. Annette Jones, advises us that dairy trade groups can submit a request for additional emergency resources directly to CDFA. Dairy trade groups including CDC, MPC and WUD have 24/7 access to the system.

Milking Equipment Inspection – There are two circumstances in which producers could require an expedited equipment inspection:

- 1) *Evacuation to a mothballed facility, providing an “occupancy inspection” allowing producers to continue to ship Grade A milk.*
- 2) *After flood waters have receded, repopulate the home dairy after returning from the host dairy.*

Dr. Steven Beam, head of CDFA’s Milk and Dairy Food Safety Branch, advises in either case, repopulating a flooded dairy or opening a closed facility, producers should first contact their [county milk inspection service](#). For dairies serviced directly by CDFA inspectors, producers should contact their [regional milk inspection office](#). Dr. Beam reports that his branch has been working closely with Tulare County, ensuring that necessary equipment inspections are being performed on an emergency basis.

Water Quality & Permit Issues – The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (RB-5) recognizes that property and animal-life saving efforts will require some producers evacuate livestock out of their currently permitted facilities. Water Board staff requests only that when emergency operations have stabilized, producers email or call the office letting them know of the move. No regulatory action would be anticipated against producers who were temporarily relocating animals due to circumstances beyond their control. Having this information however does allow staff to answer citizen and media queries in a knowledgeable and reassuring manner.

Rainfall, Flood & Evacuation Resources – CDQAP has produced a number of flooding and evacuation resources.

- [California Dairies: Coping with Flooding and Evacuations](#)
- [Checklist for Emergency Flood Evacuation of a Dairy](#)
- [Managing Dairies During Heavy Rainfall: Actions producers can take in-between rain storms.](#)

Mortalities

Thus far rendering facilities in the affected areas are not reporting significant increase in mortalities. Flooding and road closures have however on occasion hampered some normal pick-ups. Baker Commodities advises that in some cases where the water has been too deep to allow access of the rendering trucks, some producers have used tall front-end loaders to scoop up dead stock and transport them to an unflooded road where the transfer can take place. If for any reason a rendering company is unable to retrieve deadstock, producers are advised to call the CDFA’s *Rendering Disruption Emergency Hotline* at 916-900-5261. This number is available to industry and producers 24/7 to report issues.

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Disaster Recovery

Financial Assistance - Following major disasters, state and federal governments may offer disaster relief grants or low-interest loans. In our current flooding disaster local, state and federal emergencies have already been declared, making it certain that at least some funding will be available. Producers should watch trade magazines and newsletters for announcements. Important deadline windows for applying are sometimes narrow,

Documentation of losses and expenditures is essential. Receipts for any disaster related expenders (from feed to fuel to hotel rooms) should be collected in a safe place. Cell phone video with a time stamp is a quick, easy way to perform documentation.

Disaster recovery assistance is frequently provided through the USDA's [FSA](#). A variety of program's are in place including assistance for excess mortalities, injured animals, feed or non-insured crops. Producers should inquire about funding availability at their [local FSA service center](#).

Recovery Checklist

Perform and Initial Survey - If animals were sheltered-in-place, ensure that all animals are accounted for and are eating. Take photographs and video footage of damage and losses for insurance claims submission.

Survey Feed Damage - Check all sources of feeds and pasture forages for spoiling and contamination. Standing water may have ruined some pasture forage, forcing isolated animals to consume contaminated forages or even poisonous plants. Pay particular attention to stored feed and forages, looking for molds, which can both sicken animals and make their products, such as meat and milk, unsafe for human consumption.

Ensure Water Quality - Natural drinking water sources (creeks and lakes) may be unsafe due to chemical or pathogen contamination. Well water may also be contaminated, particularly if the wellhead was inundated and the well seal breached. Have drinking water tested and provide a safe drinking water source until any problems are corrected.

Inspect and Cleanup Facility - Check for down power lines and call the electrical company if present. Do not approach. Inspect barnyard for damaged fencing, down boards containing nails, roofing nails, etc. Pressure wash stalls with a detergent solution or 1:10 chlorine bleach and allow 15 minutes contact time. Have barns inspected for structural integrity, if there is any question of roof or wall stability.

Protect against Animal Disease - Consider vaccinating pastured animals against diseases associated with flood-prone areas such as Blackleg, anthrax, or leptospirosis. Flooding may also increase populations of nematodes and other parasites, such as snails hosting liver flukes.

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Animals inundated for prolonged periods may also be at greater risk for skin, udder, or GI infections. Consult with your veterinarian about appropriate preventative treatments.

Producers with questions can contact Dr. Michael Payne at 530-304-9306 or mpayne@ucdavis.edu

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