

DEALING

with the

AFTERMATH

of a Pig Barn Fire

Farm fires are always devastating events - and livestock on those farms increases the challenge. According to the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association, farm fires pose a special threat. Farms tend to be isolated and rarely have access to well-equipped urban fire departments or to large quantities of water. Barns are highly flammable and can quickly burn out of control. As a result, economic losses due to fires in farming are severe and out of proportion to the number of fires that occur. No amount of precaution will entirely rule out the chance that a fire may start, so it's important to be prepared to deal with the aftermath of a barn fire. The information in the next few pages is designed to help with some practical advice and options.

Assessing the Situation

Having an emergency plan prepared ahead of time will help in dealing with a fire. Before making any decisions and rushing into action, begin by assessing the situation. Follow a rational well-thought out plan. Don't go it alone: call in a vet, family member or another producer to help with planning decisions. In what can be overwhelming circumstances, the plan can be divided into three parts: immediate, short term, longer term.

Here are a few questions to guide you through the process:

1. Start with an inventory. What are you dealing with? Live animals? Deadstock? Both? How many?
2. If you have live animals on the farm:
 - a. Are they injured? Do they have smoke inhalation damage?
 - b. Do they require veterinary treatment? Euthanasia?
 - c. Do they need alternative housing? Feed? Water?
 - d. Can they be moved?
 - e. Can they be sold?
3. Who can help? What manpower and services are needed to implement the plan?
4. Who do you need to contact? Insurance agent, veterinarian, hydro, feed company, deadstock collector, transporter, pig buyer, processing plant, Ontario Pork, OMAFRA?

Tips & Hints: Dealing with Surviving Pigs

Marketing

- Unaffected animals can be sent for processing. This reduces the burden of caring for animals on the people who are trying to deal with the aftermath of the fire.
- Smoke inhalation and stress damage may take up to two days to appear. Chemicals released during the fire could contaminate the animal. Lung or stress damage also could lead to condemnations. If housing is available, animals should be held at least two days if there is moderate to severe smoke exposure so an accurate assessment can take place. Provide as much fresh air as promptly as possible following exposure and if possible humidify the air with a pressure washer or sprinkler/misting system. Seek the advice of your veterinarian.
- Producers should contact their receiver(s) immediately or contact Ontario Pork for assistance in arranging marketing and transport.
- Animals should be sent directly to a processor. Sows, boars and animals that aren't at market weights will need to be shipped to a processor specializing in cull or off-sort animals. Some pig buyers have experience in dealing with emergency situations and can provide advice and help to move animals quickly.

Relocating Animals

- Uninjured pigs may be moved to another barn or location.
- Things to consider include bio-security, space allowances, feed and water availability, long term prognosis of animals' health and welfare, labour requirements, market potential, and economics.
- Alternative housing is limited. Possible options include:
 - Neighbouring barns
 - Sales or assembly yards
 - Event facilities not in useIn fair weather: set up gates or fencing in nearby fields, yards, or empty bunker silos.

Special Considerations for Gestating and Farrowing Sows

- Have a plan for handling sows that have recently farrowed, may begin to farrow or are due to farrow within a week. By law, animals likely to give birth cannot be transported.
- Sows in early gestation may be accepted by a receiver under emergency situations. Determine and arrange this with a buyer directly.
- Dispersal sale for breeding stock may be an option.
- Extreme circumstances may dictate the need for euthanasia or aborting pregnancies.
- Veterinarian advice and assistance may be required.

Euthanasia

- Some animals may need to be humanely euthanized. When making these decisions, consider the animal's well being and its quality of life if it survives. If in doubt, consult with your veterinarian.
- Assess the animals and rank them according to those that need attention. Animals in pain with severe injuries or burns should be euthanized immediately.
- Smoke inhalation damage and chemical contamination are untreatable. Signs include singed hair, burns, noisy or difficulty breathing (shortness of breath), coughing, changes in vocalization, black or grey saliva, change in skin colour or unconsciousness. These animals should be euthanized.
- Producers should refer to euthanasia guidelines or the farm protocol that has been developed with their veterinarian that details methods, equipment and people needed to deal with the various sizes of pigs on their farm.
- Have a backup plan in case euthanasia equipment is destroyed or trained staff is not available.

For more information, see Ontario Pork's "On-farm Euthanasia of Swine: Options for the producer" booklet, "Caring for Compromised Pigs" booklet and the OFAC decision chart, "Should this animal be loaded?".

Tips & Hints: Deadstock Disposal

Removing large numbers of dead animals from a barn is a difficult task – physically and emotionally. Ensure you have enough people and proper equipment to make this job more manageable.

Under the Dead Animals Disposal Act, producers have 48 hours to dispose of dead animals. In the case of a fire, this would be from the time the site is released for clean up by the Fire Marshall and insurance claims adjuster. In the event of clean up delays, timing extensions may be granted by contacting the OMAFRA Dead Animal Disposal Advisor. Disposal options may include:

Rendering

- Acceptance of deadstock is at the discretion of the individual renderer. Acceptance will depend on number of animals, condition of animals, and whether the dead animals can be separated from debris. Fire damaged animals are not acceptable for rendering. Producers should have their removal company and insurance adjuster assess the situation.

Landfill

- Acceptance of deadstock is at the landfill operator's discretion. Only a few Ontario landfills accept dead animals. Phone ahead for clearance. The fee is based on weight of the load.

- Pick-up and delivery to an EPA approved disposal site (i.e. landfill) must be done by a licensed deadstock collector, or by the producer if they meet Dead Animal Disposal Act requirements (below).
- Direct transport by the producer requires a special transport permit and truck marker from the OMAFRA Dead Animal Disposal Advisor and adherence to all provincial regulations governing deadstock transport. This also applies to any deadstock transported and properly stored on another property pending pick up by a licensed collector, or transported to another property owned by the producer for burial or composting.

On-farm burial or Composting

- Deadstock may be buried or composted on site, with or without debris. Deadstock may also be buried or composted on another property owned by the producer. Deadstock regulations governing burial or composting must be observed.
- Ask local OMAFRA nutrient management specialists or Ministry of Environment staff to help select a site to avoid any potential environmental concerns.
- Barn fire mortalities generally compost quickly.
- Composting will require on-going management. Regularly monitor the site to ensure compliance with deadstock and environmental regulations.
- Material should be free of non-biodegradable material (metal, glass, concrete).

For more information on deadstock disposal options:

http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/inspection/fs_deadstock.htm

OMAFRA Dead Animals Disposal Advisor – Toll Free: 1-888-466-2372 ext. 64230 (daytime) 1-888-466-2372 ext. 64360 (after hours)

OMAFRA Factsheets: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/deadstock/index.htm>

- *Transporting Your Deadstock* • *Deadstock Disposal* • *Composting – An Alternative for Deadstock Disposal*

Tips & Hints: Insurance

- Immediately contact your insurance company for assistance and guidance. Read the fine print: Insurance policies contain numerous conditions and exemptions.
- Keep an off-site back-up of ALL farm records, inventory and breeding records. Farms without sufficient records will have difficulty making an adequate insurance claim. Requirements include: a barn description, a statement on the square footage, animal and equipment inventory, and more.
- Photographs and videos are vital: take your own photos in addition to any taken by your insurer.
- Documented third party inspections by a veterinarian or OMAFRA staff can help in the event of disputes.
- Have your accountant or bookkeeper attend all meetings with the claims adjuster.

For more information on dealing with livestock and barn fires:

1. "About Barn Fires Involving Livestock and Poultry ~ A Discussion for Farmers" Ontario Farm Animal Council, www.ofac.org
2. A comprehensive website of technical farm animal welfare related information including a searchable research database, www.livestockwelfare.com



BARN FIRE DECISION CHART: Options to Consider

MORTALITIES

SURVIVORS

RENDERING

- Non-burnt and non-singed
- Intact remains
- Free of all debris

Note: On approval by receiver. Other acceptance conditions may apply.

BURIAL OR COMPOSTING

- Burnt or singed
- Partial remains
- Containing debris (Remove debris for composting)

Note: Landfill permission required.

EUTHANIZE

- Non-ambulatory: Unable to rise and walk unassisted
- Burns and injuries
- Difficult breathing
- Exhaustion or weakness
- Weak animals at risk of going down en-route
- Recently treated animals that may have drug residues
- Farrowing sows or newborns with no housing options

Note: Euthanasia may be preferred for additional reasons.

TRANSPORT TO PROCESSOR

- Healthy animals, within 24 hours if possible. Emergency slaughter can be arranged with the plant.
- Drug withdrawal times are met
- Dry sows (not due to farrow immediately)
- Early stage gestating sows, boars, off-weights. Should be shipped to specialty plant.

Note: Animals must pass all inspections at the facility.

RELOCATE OR MAKE NEW HOUSING

- Healthy animals
- Farrowing or nursing sows, piglets
- Animals with good prognosis for recovery, (eg. exhaustion or weakness.)
- Recently treated animals that may have drug residues

Note: Re-housing should only be considered if animal health and welfare will not be compromised.



ONTARIO PORK

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