Cervids: Emergency Preparedness and Biosecurity

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Any number of disasters, both natural and man-made, can pose a threat to your farmed cervids. The best way to protect your animals is through emergency planning.

What can you do to protect and provide for your animals in the event of a disaster? Having a plan in place for various types of events is your best strategy. While cervids are certainly different than typical farm animals, many of the suggestions you will find below can be utilized or adapted for your needs.

Preparedness Documents

Do You Have a Plan for Your Livestock Should Disaster Strike?

(PDF, 135.42 KB)

Download this APHIS factsheet.

Saving the Whole Family: Disaster Preparedness

View this booklet from the American Veterinary Medical Association.

Biosecurity

Biosecurity in this context is measures or management practices designed to reduce the risk of introducing *disease* to a farm operation and prevent disease spread among animals. Biosecurity practices are understood and implemented in large-scale livestock production in an attempt to prevent catastrophic losses due to the introduction and spread of disease. These practices are far less familiar to smaller farmers and cervid producers, but no less important.

The risk of bringing infectious diseases onto your cervid farm can be reduced by implementing biosecurity practices. In the event of an infectious disease outbreak such as foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), having a biosecurity plan in place may be the difference between saving or losing your herd.

While designated documents specifically for cervid biosecurity are not available, documents generated for the cattle industry can be utilized or adapted to fit your needs. A variety of documents and links are given below to help understand and develop a biosecurity plan for your site. Once developed, they should be reviewed annually and changed as necessary. Additionally, it is a good idea determine who is responsible for emergency preparedness for your geographical location and make contact with them to develop parts of your plan.

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Biosecurity and Foot-and-Mouth Disease

Foot-and-mouth disease, or FMD, is a highly contagious viral disease in cloven-hooved animals. This disease is a significant threat to American livestock and an outbreak would significantly disrupt livestock production resulting in billions in economic losses. FMD has not been detected in the United States since the 1920s; however, it is detected in other parts of the world.

Cervids are susceptible to FMD. If FMD, as a result, would pose a threat to the cattle and swine industry, and animal movement would be restricted. Biosecurity plans help protect cervid herds and domestic livestock during an outbreak. Having a plan in place increases the odds that your non-infected herd will be allowed to ride out the outbreak. See "Site Plan Development Tools" at the bottom of this page for help developing biosecurity plans.

Resources

- Planning and Preparing for Foot-and-Mouth Disease: Quick Briefing (296.13 KB) (APHIS Veterinary Services)
- Foot-and-Mouth Disease: Fast Facts and Factsheet (The Center for Food Security and Public Health)
- Foot-and-Mouth Disease Factsheet (Secure Beef Supply)

Biosecurity and Chronic Wasting Disease

While there is no guarantee that biosecurity practices will prevent the emergence of chronic wasting disease (CWD) on your site, there are some basic practices that will help reduce the risk of CWD to your animals.

- Take steps to prohibit direct contact between your cervids and wildlife.
    - Monitor and maintain perimeter fences. Repair holes and washouts as soon as possible to prevent wildlife from entering your property.
    - Place feeders away from perimeter fences as to not attract wild cervids to the fence line where direct contact can occur between wild and captive cervids.
    - Reduce or eliminate forage immediately outside the perimeter fence to make fence lines less attractive to both wild and captive cervids.
    - Consider installing a strand of electric fence along perimeter fences to discourage contact between captive and wild cervids.
    - If wild birds are a problem at feeders or waterers, consult State wildlife agencies to develop deterrent strategies.
    - Remove dead animals from the landscape as soon as they are discovered. Do not form carcass or “dead” piles to dispose of dead animals. The carcasses attract scavengers, which can translocate infectious agents.

    - Remember, contaminated objects or materials can have infectious material attached.
    - Store feed and hay so it is not accessible to wild cervids.
- Personnel working on the site should have designated boots and outerwear that are not worn elsewhere.
- Delivery vehicles and transport vehicles should be cleaned and decontaminated before and after going onto the site. Instructions for decontamination can be found below.
- Producer vehicles such as cars, trucks, transport vehicles, tractors, skid loaders, and ATVs should be cleaned and disinfected **before and after** use on other sites. A pressure washer is useful to remove mud and feces from wheels and equipment before decontamination.
- Equipment (such as feeders, water troughs, chutes, buckets, antler removal equipment, bolus guns, and multiple-dose syringes) should not be shared between herds.
- Do not bring cervid carcasses, tissues, or byproducts onto the sites where direct or indirect contact with the captive cervids, or their associated equipment, could occur.

Site Plan Development Tools and Other Biosecurity Information

- Secure Beef Supply
    - Enhanced Biosecurity for Feedlots (information manual)
    - Biosecurity plan template
    - Training materials

Related Links

- Emergency Management
- Foot-and-Mouth Disease Emergency Response

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