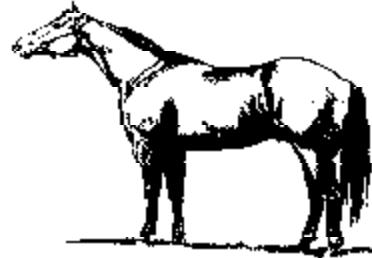


Extension Animal Science Horse Information Series

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HORSE BARN FIRES

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A fire engine siren sends a chill through most of us. Not only does fire destroy property, it can destroy lives.

The same is true when a fire occurs in a horse barn.

What can a horse owner do to reduce the risk of a barn fire?

Most horse barn fires occur in winter. So, now is a good time to review problems and enact a plan to reduce the risk of a barn fire.

Faulty electrical wiring and connections are the leading causes of barn fires. Wiring should meet local building codes. But in some rural areas, barns are never inspected. If you do not know if your facilities were inspected, have a qualified electrician check the wiring.

Electrical wires should be in conduit pipes so horses and rodents cannot chew through the protective insulation for the wire. Horses should not have access to the conduit. Have an

adequate electric fuse box in the barn with easy access in case of a fire or other problems.

Never use extension cords or multiple-plug strips in the barn. Disconnect coffee pots, radios, fans, portable heaters and other electrical appliances when not in use.

Hay is a potential fire hazard around barns. To reduce the impact of hay fires in the loft, place sheets of drywall on the loft floor and cover them with plywood. This sandwich-type loft floor reduces the damage of a fire. Drywall retards fire, often allowing local firefighters to extinguish a fire before it burns through the loft.

Consider storing hay and bedding in a separate building.

Feed, hay and bedding areas should be "off-limits" to all individuals, except employees.

Keep your barn clean and free of dust, cobwebs, trash and other easily ignited fire hazards.

Do not allow smoking in your barn. Post "No Smoking" signs at all entrances, and provide sand buckets for lighted cigarettes.

Place fire extinguishers at each entrance and in the tack room. Have an adequate water supply and pressure. And, have adequate water hoses to reach all areas of the barn.

Consider lightning rods for your barn.

Install a fire detection system to notify you or 911 emergency operators.

A sprinkler system may be advisable in some situations. Approximately 95 percent of fires where a sprinkler system existed have been controlled or extinguished.

Have an all-weather access road to your barn for the local fire engine. In some rural areas, you need to be a member of the local fire company.

Develop an evacuation plan. Stall your most valuable horses so they can be removed

first from the barn. Have adequate holding pens or an area where horses can be properly confined when removed from the barn. Loose horses are dangerous and often charge back into a burning barn.

Consider having your local fire department inspect your barn and make recommendations.

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