

Resources for livestock during emergencies in Alberta, Canada

Dr Melissa Moggy
Alberta Farm Animal Care



© 2021 by the authors.
License Australian Institute
for Disaster Resilience,
Melbourne, Australia. This
is an open access article
distributed under the terms
and conditions of the Creative
Commons Attribution
(CC BY) license ([https://
creativecommons.org/
licenses/by/4.0/](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)).

Thousands of farm animals live in and are transported throughout Alberta, Canada every year. To help reduce risk of injury or death to these animals, a number of livestock emergency resources have been created.

Alberta has traditional emergency resources such as police and fire services and the Alberta Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Alberta SPCA). However, additional services were needed to help livestock owners protect animals and their livelihoods, particularly during Alberta's extreme weather conditions.

ALERT Line

The ALERT Line is a 24/7 phone line where farmers help farmers. The service was created in 1995 and anyone can call anonymously to get help or report animal welfare concerns. While the ALERT Line does not have regulatory capacity, it works directly with those who do, such as the Alberta SPCA and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

People are encouraged to call if they:

- are concerned that livestock may be neglected or distressed
- have questions about livestock care
- see livestock in an emergency situation
- need support in caring for their livestock
- need an emergency livestock handling equipment trailer.

In Alberta, if someone suspects abuse or livestock neglect, sees severely injured livestock or if dead animals are present, the Alberta SPCA must be contacted. During the call, details are collected and forwarded to the Alberta SPCA and the caller is encouraged to contact the Alberta SPCA directly. In instances where livestock are on a highway or major road, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police is notified as this is a threat to human safety. The ALERT Line relies heavily on volunteers who are trained to assess animals and the environment. A volunteer may conduct an initial drive-by inspection of the farm to gather more information and determine if the concern is valid. This may be followed by a phone call to the farmer or a farm visit. If there is a serious issue or the farmer is uncooperative, the

Alberta SPCA is contacted. If there is a management issue, the coordinator and volunteer work can with the farmer to determine a solution. The case is monitored and if there is insufficient progress, it is forwarded to the Alberta SPCA. If there is no reason for concern, then the call is labelled as an information call. This is an opportunity to educate the caller on acceptable animal care practices.

Emergency livestock handling equipment trailers

Emergency livestock handling equipment trailers are outfitted with essential equipment needed in the event of a livestock emergency. They are usually housed at fire stations as fire services are generally dispatched to livestock emergencies. Trailers are dispatched through 911 and the ALERT Line.

The first 2 trailers were independently created by separate counties in Alberta. Alberta Farm Animal Care has since established 5 trailers through a government grant in 2012. Since then, another 12 trailers have been added. Trailer operators receive training through Lakeland College, Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue training or other livestock emergency training courses. Alberta Farm Animal Care has an administration role and supports the creation of new trailers and ongoing training.

The ALERT Line and the emergency livestock handling equipment trailers have been successful and valuable additions to Alberta livestock farmers and animals. These or similar resources could be applied to other locations to support livestock welfare.

Alberta Farm Animal Care Association was created by Alberta livestock producers and is a collective voice of the livestock industry on matters of livestock welfare.

Access their resources for emergencies at:
www.afac.ab.ca/resources/emergency-preparedness.