

















You can reduce the risk of wildfire on your property.

-  Communicate early with fire professionals to coordinate firefighting on your property.
-  Keep copies of gate keys and a written list of combinations in a known location.
-  Mow grass and trim back weeds around pastures and structures to create and maintain firebreaks.
-  Create a fuel-free space around all fuel tanks and structures. Ground all fueling nozzles to avoid sparking a fire.
-  Create a safety zone for firefighting equipment and water supply that is clear of combustible fuels.
-  Reinforce fences with metal posts.
-  Make sure wiring is grounded.
-  Check hay bale moisture content often and keep adequate fire equipment on site.
-  Use spark arresters and check for dragging metal components on all equipment.
-  Create a livestock evacuation plan.
-  Ensure proper registration and branding of livestock.
-  Have a plan for feeding livestock if grazing land is destroyed by fire.
-  Open/unlock gates so livestock can escape flames.
-  Hook up your stock trailer early and be ready for an evacuation.



## Week 7 Discussion: Communities and Disaster Preparedness

Living in East Texas I have seen my fair share of hay fires, some of which were in my own pasture (pictured above). For those who may not be familiar with what this is, it is a fire that is caused when plant reactions and bacterial growth combine to raise temperatures in hay bales. According to the Texas department of agriculture, "Excessive moisture is the most common cause of hay fires, Odd as it might seem, wet hay is more likely to lead to a spontaneous-combustion fire than dry hay" ("Home", 2021). As you can see from the pictures above these fires can damage or destroy hay, barns and YES even a tractor and baler which can cost farmers thousands of dollars in terms of building replacement, feed replacement and lost revenues.

I have spent a great deal of time researching websites concerning this very issue after a small fire in my own pasture turned into a 43-acre fire (pictured above). The best information I was able to locate on disaster preparedness was the Texas Department of State Health Services (txready.org, 2021), where it offers three primary strategies for being prepared for a disaster:

**Be Informed** – "Natural disasters can occur randomly. Man-made disasters can be just as unpredictable" (txready.org, 2021). It is our responsibility to make sure that the community is kept informed of the potential disasters that could occur as well as plans that we as a community or individual should have in place.

**Make a Plan** – "Disasters can happen suddenly" (txready.org, 2021). The community as well as households should have plans in place and information on adequate communication and interventions should these situations occur. In our community we hold monthly meetings during hay baling season to discuss strategies and plans for our area. Our plan includes but is not limited to:

- Who to contact
- Safety zone for emergency personnel with a water source
- A livestock evacuation plan
- Proper branding of all our livestock (it took several days to locate them)
- Livestock feeding plan if grazing land is destroyed
- A stock trailer is ready and hooked up during this season

**Build a Kit** – “Being prepared for the unexpected brings peace of mind (txready.org, 2021). It is important, no matter the disaster to be prepared. My personal kit includes:

- Extra copies of gate keys for easy access to different pastures
- Equipment or tools to knock down flames and separate bales
- Hoses with straight-tip nozzles etc.
- Emergency First Aid kit
- Information concerning treating injuries, burns and smoke inhalation

**I would also like to add Getting Involved** – My husband and I are involved by volunteering to be part of our community disaster team. We attend our community meetings as well as offer education as needed, and even offer our assistance/equipment.

Our experience with disaster showed us just how necessary it is that we not only make a plan, no matter how grand it is, but that we get involved in the community in helping to make sure that we as a whole are ready if disaster were to strike.

#### **A Nursing Role related to disaster preparedness:**

“Well-prepared and educated rural nurses who combine theoretical knowledge with their understanding of a rural community potentially can reduce the impact of a disaster. Other nursing roles include mentoring in disaster preparation and assisting in initiatives to address community recovery in the aftermath of a disaster” (Kulig, 2006).

#### **Reference:**

Home. Texasagriculture.gov. (2021). Retrieved 10 February 2021, from <https://www.texasagriculture.gov/>.

txready.org. txready.org. (2021). Retrieved 10 February 2021, from <https://texasready.gov/>.

Kulig, J. C., Edge, D., & Smolenski, S. (2014). Wildfire disasters: implications for rural nurses. *Emergency nursing journal : AENJ*, 17(3), 126–134.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aenj.2014.04.003>