March 2017 Kansas Wildfires

USAHA Committee on Animal Emergency Management

Justin Smith DVM
Kansas Animal Health Commissioner
Kansas Wildfires
March 4 - March 9, 2017
March 2017 Kansas Wildfires

- 651,576 acres burned
- 19 counties
- 1 fatality
- Approximately 40+ homes destroyed
- Estimate 3500 – 9000 head of livestock killed
- Airspace restrictions
Reno Co. Animal Evacuation Center

• Kansas State Fairgrounds
• 56 plus horses, many small pets, bucket calves
• KDA field veterinarian managed intake
• Local KSART teams organized feed & supplies
March 2017 Kansas Wildfires

• Air Support
  – 4 Blackhawks – Reno County
  – 2 Chinooks, 2 Blackhawks – Clark County
  – Air National Guard Fixed Wing – Clark County

• Bambi Bucket Drops
  – Approximately 200
RESPONSE AND LESSONS LEARNED
Response and Lessons Learned

• Proactive communication call
  – Area livestock industry
  – Emergency Managers
  – Depts. of Natural Resources, Health & Environment

• Carcass disposal waivers obtained

• Early communication
  with local utility regulators or “Dig Safe”
Response and Lessons Learned

• Community Meetings
  – Setting and atmosphere are important
  – Presence is important
  – Multi-Agency Recovery Center

• Provide coordination and information support
• Industry associations utilized for volunteer and donation management
Response and Lessons Learned

• Locals more comfortable with local response
  – Kansas Agriculture Emergency Response Corp.

• Animal mortalities
  – Everyone is curious
  – Realistic impact numbers will not be available
Response and Lessons Learned

• Animal Welfare
  – Utilize qualified personnel
    • (Understand this is not easy for them)
  – Owners and producers not comfortable euthanizing their own animals
ALL-HAZARDS PREPAREDNESS FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

www.prep4agthreats.org

A guide to help rural agriculture communities prepare for threats to their families, farms, animals and businesses
WILDFIRES

Wildfires have steadily become a more pronounced threat across the United States. Wildfires occur when a combination of weather conditions and fuel loads come together to create favorable conditions for both ignition and spread. Wildfires are most prevalent in the Plain States during the late winter and early spring. In the West, wildfire season generally peaks during the mid to late summer. However, wildfires can occur year-round.

Wildfires pose a particular risk for rural communities because of the vast amount of resources needed to combat them. A large-scale response to a wildfire may last several days to weeks and be made up of a combination of local, state, and federal resources. It is not uncommon to see dozens of local jurisdictions responding collectively to a fire.

Wildfires can severely impact rural communities in a number of ways. Fires can significantly damage infrastructure - homes, barns, sheds, fencing - as well as farm equipment, vehicles, and structural damage to essential services such as electricity and water. If evacuations are necessary, communities will need a plan for short-term or long-term sheltering as well as for dealing with supplies both requested and donated. Livestock or pets that are in the path of a fire may be killed or injured from the fire itself or from smoke inhalation. Even if livestock are not physically injured, the loss of feed, either from burnt pasture land or consumed hay, may make continued livestock production difficult.

Understanding and identifying your risk to wild fires is the first step in potentially limiting their impact on your home, farm, or livestock. The following factsheets provide suggestions to reduce your risk during wildfires, take action during wildfire situations, and recover after a wildfire has impacted your family.