



# DISASTER RECOVERY BEGINS WITH PREPAREDNESS

*By Nik Nikodym • Commanders Place Longhorns*

There are some basics to disaster recovery. Many of them are easy and just require some pre-event thought. When it comes to preparedness, I like to ask two questions. First, what is the most devastating event that your area or situation could endure? Second, what is the most likely event that your area or situation will endure. For me, and many others in Oklahoma, the answer to both questions might be the same. In our case, the answer to both questions would be tornadoes. Your situation will likely be different; are you in hurricane country, are wild fires a huge concern to you, do you have extensive highway frontage, what about disease? So take a moment and decide what would be the most devastating event, and what would be the most likely? Have you considered what you can do to mitigate these situations? Now some of this may sound like basic ranching, but your answers to the questions of worst/most likely will, and probably already have, affected your preparations. Example, we should all be vaccinating our livestock. Why do we ensure this is done? Easy – to prevent disease in our herds and flocks. Geography is a main factor that dictates the types of disasters that befall people. What if I ask about your most devastating event possible, and you say blizzard? Multiple pastures are a great thing if you are concerned about tornadoes, not such a good thing if the worst possible event is a blizzard. So I mentioned geography, another consideration is what are the basic needs of your animals?



Again, basic stuff, but worth consideration and discussion; food, water, vaccinations and pens/fences are what I come up with. So, that takes me to the roots of preparedness, we must not only consider what are the worst and most likely destructive events, but we must also consider geography and basic needs. That is to say, given whatever event (worst/most likely), taking into account the geography, how do we provide for our animals basic needs? Or to put it more simply, what can I do pre-event to ensure manure production (in our case) continues? In the “real world” that we live in we call that Pre-Boom and Post-Boom. Again, the time to prepare to recover is prior to the event (Pre-Boom). Supplies, food, vaccine, fuel, water may not be available when you need them most if you don’t prepare ahead of the “Boom”. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has an education piece to their mission. FEMA’s primary venue to educate is through their Emergency Management Institute (EMI). EMI has countless courses available online and can be visited at <https://training.fema.gov>. If

you have interest in this subject matter, I highly recommend their course: Live-stock in Disasters (IS 0111.a).

To this point I have asked a lot of questions. How about some thoughts about solutions and answers? Again, I don’t pretend to be a know-it-all (nor do I play one on TV), but I do think some of these ideas may be of use to you as you consider how well you are prepared to recover from a disaster. In my case,

a tornado is both the most likely and most devastating event that I prepare for, but not the only events that we prepare for. Specifically, I don't keep all our hay, to get the herd through a winter, in one place. If all of my food supply were to be spread over the county to our northeast by a tornado that would be a failure to prepare. We keep about 30 t-posts and eight to ten cedar post around the place along with at least one spool of barbed wire to respond and fix several hundred yards of fence should a tornado, a flooding event or a car take out a fence line. One of the other events that we prepare to recover from is severe winter weather. Our multiple pasture situations help when we prepare to recover from a tornado, but hinder our preparation to recover from a winter storm event (blizzard). We mitigate that situation, as best we can, by having 20+ small square bales in both our pastures. These bales are available to get the herd through a two to three day span. If I or someone else can get to the pasture to feed these small squares, manure production will continue (and that's a good thing). Of course water becomes a concern at some point. For us, our stock ponds rarely freeze after just a week or so of cold weather, but for you that may be one of your larger concerns. While on the subject of water, Texas and Oklahoma are just now coming out of a severe drought. We lost a pond in one of our pastures during the height of the drought. We had to rely on a neighbor's well and several hundred yards of garden hose to fill a stock tank. But to mitigate that situation we have what I call our mushroom tank. The tank fits and sits inside the bed of our truck and holds about 220 gallons, both our pastures have a several hundred gallon stock tank in them. Please do your own truck math (as I call it), a gallon of fresh water weighs 7.5+ lbs X 220 gallons = at least an F-250/2500 pickup.

Your situation will be different than mine discussed above. If your worst case scenario includes an earthquake, that sounds a lot like a fencing and transportation problem to me (for you to plan and mitigate). Other examples could be a flooding situation. I have seen where the highest portion of a pasture (say four to ten acres)

are fenced off. When the flooding comes, the rancher opens the gate, the cattle walk in to get out of the water and eat. Rancher closes gate, basic needs covered; food, water and fencing. If you don't have a situation like this to get your animals out of a flood plain, I highly encourage you to plan through that situation. I know that many of the readers of this magazine have relatively small acreages, and many live with their animals on the property that they also live on. That has several advantages and several disadvantages. Like everyone, I would encourage you to plan to recover from whatever disasters apply. I would also add that plan should probably include

that you have animal food to survive a week should you get cutoff or isolated. Pen and fencing repair will also become important should an event affect your home/farm. The feed shop and gas station won't be open the day after a major event.

I know this article is light on specifics, but that wasn't my hope. My hope for this article was to get people thinking about how they can best prepare to recover from a devastating event affecting their farm or ranch. I hope that you

enjoyed the article, and I hope to meet you down the road.

*About the author: David (Nik) Nikodym is certified by FEMA as a Professional Continuity Practitioner (PCP). He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Texas Longhorn Breeders Association of America (TLBAA). He and his family raise Registered Texas Longhorns in central Oklahoma. His paying job is as a Commander in the U.S. Navy where he has significant experience working at USNORTHCOM and with FEMA to plan for National Special Security Events and national level disaster preparedness. Additionally, he has taught numerous courses for USNORTHCOM throughout America on how the military would plug in to assist during a time of disaster; Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA). For more information about his longhorn program visit: [www.commandersplacelonghorns.com](http://www.commandersplacelonghorns.com)*

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