



Let the Plans Begin

A letter from the editor of Hobby Farms.

By Karen Keb Acevedo

The first of the year always causes us to sit back and take a look at our lives and figure out what needs adjusting, fine tuning, etc.

That is why every year on New Year's Eve, my husband and I sit down and write out a list of goals for the coming year.

We consider our home and the repairs or routine maintenance it might need; we think about our land and any projects we want to accomplish on it; we consider our personal goals and what we would like to check off—"lose weight" always appears, as well as "read more" and "make more time for friends."

And lastly, the toughest pill to swallow is always the finances—we take a good, hard look at them and determine what's working—and what isn't (the "Dave Ramsey Plan" is always up for debate!).

Just as routine dictates that we change the batteries in our smoke detectors when daylight saving time begins and ends, the first of the year should propel us into yearly master planning and preparations. That is why the theme of this issue is "emergencies"—more specifically, how not to be caught in one unprepared.

Emergencies are inherently stressful situations, particularly when they involve a natural disaster of some kind. As hobby farmers, we all know it's not so easy to simply pick up and leave any time we like. But in the midst of a wildfire, hurricane, tornado or flood, that is exactly what we must do. Follow our guidelines in "Get Out Now!" to develop your custom evacuation plan should you—and your animals—be caught with just 10 minutes to spare. A solid, written plan that everyone is made aware of will go a long way toward peace of mind.

Emergencies of the four-legged kind are cause for another kind of plan. Your plan for dealing with animal injuries and illness should involve honed observation, education and hands-on skills. As a responsible livestock owner, it is your duty to be aware of potential problems in your herd. Your ability to identify and treat problems, sometimes independent of veterinary support, will develop with time and experience, and will help you meet one of those annual financial goals—keeping vet bills down. Read "In Your Hands" for the rundown on must-have veterinary skills.

And finally, perhaps the scariest emergency of all involves how to deal with our own government when they come calling under eminent domain; for without the farm, the rest is moot. Since the landmark ruling in the case of Kelo vs. City of New London in 2005, the words "eminent domain" have struck fear in farmers' hearts. Our homes, land and livelihoods could be in serious jeopardy should your town decide they want to widen the road (to make way for all that traffic going to the new 20-screen multiplex) or build a golf course where you currently farm. Don't miss "Uncle Sam Wants ... Your Land" to learn what's involved in cases such as these and what you can do to ensure the best possible outcome should you get swept up in one.

Take the time to plan now for emergencies in the future. Eventually, you'll be glad you did.