Protecting Livestock during a Flood

Livestock not in a confined area can usually take care of themselves during floods. Do not let them become trapped in low-lying pens or fenced in areas. If time allows, livestock should be transported to higher ground.

In broad, level flood plains where flood waters are seldom deeper than 3 or 4 feet, construct mounds of soil or compacted fill dirt on which livestock can stay until flood waters recede. In some cases, livestock were saved when they climbed on to stacked bales of hay and straw. Try to locate these mounds where they will not be washed away by fast-flowing water.

1. Provide feed and water. Water is essential. Thirsty animals will do what it takes to reach drinkable water, even muddy flood waters. If water is in short supply, limit feed intake.
2. If animals are housed with machinery during a flood, protect them from sharp edges and protruding parts such as cutter bars, header snouts, and tillage shanks. (Do not use hay, because animals will eat it.)
3. Block off narrow passageways where animals would be unable to turn around or become trapped. A few heavy animals in a narrow dead end can be dangerous both to themselves and the building. Again, animals are in many cases safer if not confined during raising flood waters.
4. Be absolutely certain that herbicides, pesticides, and treated seeds are not even remotely accessible to livestock, and are stored where flood water will not contaminate livestock feed or water. Livestock that consume these products will be unfit for market.
5. Turn off electricity at the main switch. Livestock could damage electric fixtures, causing fires or electrocutions.
6. If there is a possibility that dairy barns may become flooded, move cattle out of the barn and enclosed feeding areas. During rapid rise of water, cattle often refuse to leave the barn and may drown if the water rises high enough in the barn.
7. Don’t forget pets and other livestock such as 4-H lambs, pigs, horses, or other animals kept in stalls or pens from which they cannot escape.