



Firewise for Horse Owners

Southwestern Idaho is extremely prone to fires and is one of the most active fire zones in North America. Fires can start directly (e.g., lightning or other ignition sources) or indirectly (e.g., embers from a nearby fire). Windblown embers can travel miles, landing and igniting buildings or other combustibles.

When horses or livestock are involved, action needs to be taken quickly. Be proactive!



Minimizing Risk

With advance planning, there are many things you can do to reduce risk on your horse property.



Create defensible space

Design areas around structures that are maintained to reduce fire danger. This reduces the risk of fire spreading to structure and provides firefighters access and safer areas from which to defend structures.

Add buffers and firebreaks

Clear a 15-30 foot wide buffer between combustible materials and structures. This can be a plowed or disced strip, gravel or dirt road, path, or area mowed low.



Store hay, bedding, livestock feed and other combustible materials away from structures.

Reduce fuels

- Remove cheatgrass and dried weeds through grazing, mowing prescribed burning or herbicide use.
- Use livestock to graze down potentially flammable grasses, weeds or shrubs—goats are great for this!
- Clean roofs and gutters of leaves, branches and debris.
- Avoid storing firewood, trash, lumber, empty feed sacks or other combustibles near structures.
- Avoid wood and plastic yard furniture and door mats made of coconut fiber or other combustible materials.



Remove all synthetics from horses

Use leather or cotton halters and leads instead. Windblown embers from fires can easily melt nylon halters, fly masks, and synthetic blankets and sheets.



Firewise Landscaping

Begin with firewise landscaping around your home, barn and other structures along irrigation ditches for erosion control and bank stabilization.

Attributes that decrease flammability include:

- Low oil or resin content (clematis, flax)
- High moisture content (golden currant, red-flowering currant)
- Low, compact growth form (creeping phlox, stonecrop)
- High soap or salt content (honeysuckle, soapwort, syringa, saltbrush)
- Green stems (succulents)
- Drought tolerance (penstemon, globe mallow)



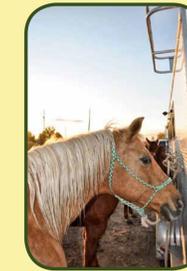
Visit the Firewise Garden at the Idaho Botanical Garden in Boise for more ideas.

Evacuation Planning

The time to do your planning is now, not when the fire's coming over the ridge and the sheriff is telling you it's time to go!

Transporting horses

Decide in advance which horses you will evacuate and make sure they are suitably trained for transport. If you do not have enough trailer space for all of your horses, make arrangements now for additional transportation.



Temporary holding areas

Pre-determine possible locations to take your horses to should a fire arise.

- A friend's horse property
- Stockyard or sales yard
- Fairgrounds
- Show grounds
- Racetrack
- Large park



Fire-safe areas at home

When evacuation is not possible place horses in a fire-safe area on your property. Put water and feed in the center of the area in non-flammable (metal) containers.

The fire-safe area should be as large as possible and have fireproof fencing. Possibilities include:

- A large, dry lot turnout
- A sand arena
- An overgrazed field

Structures and fencing

Locate houses, barns and other structures away from the edges of bluffs or tops of hills. Fire travels uphill quickly and a draw works like a chimney pulling fire up its sides.

Choose non-flammable materials for structures and fencing:

- Sidings: metal, brick, adobe
- Roofs: metal, tile, brick, living or green roof
- Fencing: wire, panel, t-posts



Create defensible space, buffers and firebreaks around all structures.



Use wire or metal panel fencing.



Remove flammable vegetation around buildings.



Plan ahead to protect your family, livestock and pets!



SW Idaho Resource Conservation and Development District



Choose yard furniture made of nonflammable materials.



Use fire-resistant materials like metal, brick, tile, and adobe for structures.



Remove nylon halters, fly masks, etc. from horses.



Have plenty of water available in non-flammable containers on your property.



Provide non-flammable containers for food in a fire-safe area at home.