

MITIGATING IMPACTS OF LIVESTOCK TRANSPORTATION ACCIDENTS

LIVESTOCK TRANSPORTATION ACCIDENTS AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Each year there are approximately 291 wrecks involving commercial livestock transportation on our highways, according to the United States Department of Transportation. The number of horse trailer accident reports each year is over 4,000.

A commercial livestock semi-trailer truck is hauling about 50,000 to 55,000 pounds of live animals which move uncontrollably at times. But research indicates livestock does not usually generate the first problem.

Studies show 85 percent of wrecks are driver error. Fifty-nine percent of the incidents happen between midnight and 9 a.m. Over 83 percent of the wrecks include a rollover, usually to the right side but many block all or part of the roadway. Of

the species involved, 56 percent are cattle, 27 percent are pigs, 11 percent are poultry and some are even bee wrecks.

Now that you understand a livestock hauler wreck may involve 50 cows, 100 calves, 300+ sheep or 400+ hogs you might understand how complicated this can get.

PUBLIC SAFETY IS THE PRIORITY

When a livestock hauling wreck occurs, the first priority is public safety. First the safety of the driver and anyone else needs to be addressed. Warning systems must be set up so other uninformed drivers do not complicate the crash. Then the public roadway must be reopened as soon as possible. At this point public safety and addressing the welfare of the animals can be combined with the right response teams and training to mitigate risk and property loss. Getting the livestock off the truck, contained and moved will allow the truck to be moved from the roadway allowing traffic to re-establish.



Scott Cotton, UW Extension



Emergency crews and producers respond to a livestock hauling accident, Goshen County, Wyoming, 2019. Note the use of portable corrals.

THE TEAM REQUIRED

To make all of this happen you need an integrated and cross-trained team including:

- Law enforcement: To control traffic and conduct depopulation if required.
- Wrecker operators: To stabilize the wreck and move it after livestock is removed.
- Fire department extrication: To cut open the truck to allow livestock to egress and to allow handlers access inside without compromising the structural integrity of the trailer.
- Livestock officials: To verify livestock ownership and losses.
- Veterinarians: To provide triage of livestock, sedation, health care or decisions.
- Livestock handlers: To capture, move and transport livestock to a safe zone for evaluation.
- Specialized equipment: Portable corrals to contain the scene and then transport livestock offsite.
- Emergency management: To administrate the numerous functions of the multi-faceted team.

Once a local or regional cross-trained team is in place they can often respond to a livestock hauler accident in less than 30 minutes if kept in communication with Emergency Management.

The protocol for mitigating such an accident is as follows:

- Law enforcement arrives at scene and secures the area.
- Other team components are paged out.
- Livestock handling team utilizes portable corrals to establish a livestock perimeter around the wreck.

- Fire department cuts open each compartment as directed by team (one compartment at a time). Some livestock egress and are contained by handlers. Livestock official, veterinarian and handlers inspect livestock status and location.
- Each compartment is sequentially opened releasing ambulatory livestock for capture. Process is repeated for livestock with limited movement. Handlers transport these animals to a safer location out of traffic.
- Livestock with more serious injuries are assessed for treatment/evacuation or euthanized in place. All livestock are moved from the truck.
- Handlers and livestock officials remove portable corrals, panels and chutes used for evacuation.
- Wrecker crew uprights and removes truck elements from roadway.
- All parties conduct a debriefing and after action report.

The ability to both address public safety and minimize the loss of livestock property in a timely and safe manner provides a less detrimental approach than simply depopulating all of the animals involved in a trucking accident.

Each of the teams' components have specific skills that enhance safety and effectiveness of the process. States like Wyoming and Montana which have to haul livestock to other states have implemented training programs to form these teams. For more information contact Scott Cotton at (307)235-9400 or scotton1@uwyo.edu

The Extension Disaster Education Network has collaborated on these programs and has additional material at site www.extensiondisaster.net.



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