

RISK MANAGEMENT FOR FARMS

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Regular maintenance on all aspects of your farm is important. When you do repairs to your vehicles and farm equipment you should also do maintenance to your farm buildings.

The electrical system in your barn is the most forgotten part. If it works leave it alone is the wrong attitude to take. All parts of your electrical system need to be checked at least once a year. There are miles of wire in your barn, most of which isn't easily seen. Everything that uses hydro will generate heat. Loose connections will make this worse. With the conditions (water and gases) in hog barns, corrosion is common for most electrical parts. I have had 2 large hog operations test corrosion resistive receptacles. It is now a recommendation from Manitoba Hydro to the Canadian Electrical Code to make this a code change. Proper surge protection is very important with all the electronics. Clean Volt is a filter that prevents lightning and spikes in voltage. There is also protection available for your telephone lines to protect your alarm system.

A proper alarm system is a very important tool for protection and peace of mind. There are some alarm systems that are much better than others. Alarms should have high, low temperature settings. These settings should be adjusted as the seasons change. The alarm must also indicate power failure.

Most alarm systems only monitor one phase of your hydro system therefore it is important to install a phase relay. This is easily installed at a small cost by your electrician. Alarm systems should be tested regularly and logged. Batteries should be changed twice a year.

A proper size generator is important to the life of your livestock. Your generator should be tested monthly under load conditions. This testing should be logged and yearly maintenance done. The generator must be properly hooked to the electrical system with a transfer switch. A PTO generator is fine but a tractor large enough to run it must be on site at all times. It is important that more than one staff member knows how to operate the generator.

The heating system in your barn must be serviced annually by a qualified contractor. I have been suggesting electrical grease called Nolux (or a similar type) be installed on the electrical wiring of the box heaters. This service work is suggested to be done before the heating season.

A Rodent program is important to the biosecurity of your operation. If you have rodents there is no biosecurity. It is recommended that a Pest Control company come in to set up your program. They will locate the bait stations in the proper locations. Then you can maintain

your own program. It is recommended that you log the activity of the bait stations monthly and change the type of bait quarterly.

Fire extinguishers are a must. They should be located at all mechanical areas. They should also be located at each exit from the barn and every 75 feet in the hallways. Everyone working in the barn should be trained on the use of a fire extinguisher. Your local fire department should be familiar with your operation. A farm visit is recommended by the fire department. A diagram of your farm's critical points should be available to the fire department.

Welding repairs should be done outside of the barn when possible. When this is not possible they should be done in the morning. Someone should stay in the area for at least an hour. This area should be checked before lunch and at the end of the day to make sure there are no hot spots.

Fire walls should be hollow concrete block or poured concrete with parapet above the roof and past the side walls. All openings in the wall must maintain the same rating. It is recommended that a two hour rating be maintained.