



Cheshire
Fire & Rescue Service

FARMS, BARNS AND STABLE SAFETY

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's
Fire Safety and Animal Rescue Guidance



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For more information on the contents of this booklet, visit cheshirefire.gov.uk or scan the QR code.



If you need to contact Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, please call **01606 868700** for general enquiries.



In an emergency, always **call 999**.

Introduction

Each year in the UK, approximately 1,600 farm buildings are destroyed by fire – many of which could have been prevented.

Farms are vulnerable to accidental fires, such as a cigarette discarded into a field or hay that has self-heated and ignited.

A serious fire on a farm can affect the financial stability of even the most well-run business - 40% of businesses that suffer a serious fire never trade successfully again.

While horses and ponies make up a large proportion of the animals we assist, Cheshire is also home to cattle and other livestock kept on farms, smallholdings, and private land.

With major equestrian venues, riding schools, livery yards, and countless farm businesses across the county - as well as horseboxes, livestock trailers, and agricultural vehicles travelling our roads every day - our crews encounter a wide range of large animal emergencies.

Understanding how our animal rescue technicians work and knowing what they may need from you if called out can help resolve incidents quickly and safely, while keeping distress to your animal to a minimum.



Common fire hazards

A fire hazard is anything that could start a fire, including ignition sources and combustible materials. In barns and stables, hay is a major risk, because it can self heat and ignite.

Hay with moisture above 18% can ferment, producing heat and flammable gases. If the internal temperature reaches 55°C, there is a high risk of ignition. Check hay frequently, especially within the first six weeks since cutting. Hay temperature probes can help you monitor the centre of the bales.

Machinery and vehicles can be an unexpected hazard. Maintain equipment with regular electrical and mechanical servicing to mitigate overheating risks. To protect livestock and structures, ensure all vehicles are parked well away from buildings.

Arson

Around 40% of farm fires are started deliberately. While arson attacks may be difficult to eliminate, taking precautions can reduce the risk. Our simple checklist on page 5 will help you see whether any red highlighted risk areas apply to your property. If so, steps should be taken to reduce the risk.

Every business is legally required to complete a fire risk assessment, and this checklist should be included within your wider fire risk assessment and action plan.

Arson reduction checklist

Signal Crime	Yes	No
1. Is there a history of vandalism or fire setting in the area around the farm?	☐	☐
2. Is trespass a problem?	☐	☐
Storage	Yes	No
1. Is hay and straw removed from the field as soon as possible after harvesting?	☐	☐
2. Is hay and straw stored separately from other farm buildings particularly those housing fuels, agrochemicals and machinery?	☐	☐
3. Is hay and straw stored in stacks of reasonable size spaced at least 10 metres apart?	☐	☐
4. Is hay and straw stored separately from livestock housing?	☐	☐
Security	Yes	No
1. Are petrol, diesel and other fuels stored in secure areas?	☐	☐
2. Are fuel storage tank outlets padlocked?	☐	☐
3. Are fertilisers and pesticides kept under lock and key?	☐	☐
4. Is the security of all farm buildings maintained at all times?	☐	☐
5. Is security lighting provided?	☐	☐
6. Are the farm buildings fitted with a fully operational intruder alarm with a monitored link to an alarm receiving station?	☐	☐
7. Is all refuse disposed of safely and on a regular basis?	☐	☐
Fire Safety Management	Yes	No
1. Are all unoccupied areas regularly checked to ensure they are safe and secure and that there is no unnecessary accumulation of combustible materials?	☐	☐

To reduce the risk of an arson attack, any of the highlighted areas receiving a tick will require a control measure to be put in place. The outcomes of this arson checklist should be included in the overall fire risk assessment and action plan.

Five steps to fire risk assessment

You must have a fire risk assessment for your premises, it's the law.

This will help you identify hazards around the workplace where you need to put measures in place to remove or reduce the risk.

There are five steps to carrying out a fire risk assessment. The government provides free guidance with a template, visit [gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-5-step-checklist](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-5-step-checklist)

You may have diversified or adapted buildings and land for alternative uses. This might include bed and breakfast accommodation, farm shops, visitor centres, mazes and stabling to name a few. These all pose different fire risks and should be risk assessed to make sure preventative and protective measures are in place.



1 Fire hazards

A fire hazard is anything that can start a fire, such as ignition sources or combustible materials, such as:

- electrical equipment
- arson
- cooking
- smoking
- heating
- contractors

2 People at risk

How many people are in the premises? Are there any young, disabled, or lone workers present in the premises?

3 Evaluate and act

How many floors and staircases are in the premises? The number and location of exits? Are fire alarms, fire exit signs, emergency lighting and fire extinguishers needed?

4 Record, plan and train

Do you have a clear plan of how you are going to keep people safe from fire? Do your staff know what to do in case of fire? Do you complete fire drills? Are fire safety provisions being maintained?

Your plan details what needs doing and by when. Use the checklist to make sure you have covered all areas.

5 Review

Your fire risk assessment needs to be regularly reviewed and updated if there are any significant changes.

Your safety

Clothing and overalls

Grease, oil, and fuel buildup can make workwear highly flammable.



- Even small amounts of fuel or oil can build up over time, including wiping oily hands on your clothing.
- Wash clothes regularly with suitable degreasers, even if buildup is not visible.
- If clothing becomes saturated, change immediately. Do not work near heat sources until you have changed.
- Store soiled clothes in ventilated areas away from potential ignition sources.

Hot work safety

- Remove straw, dust, and oily rags within 10-metres of your workspace
- Remove lighters, aerosol cans, or flammable items from your pockets.
- Stay in the area for at least 30 minutes after finishing to check for smouldering materials.



Emergency Response: Stop, Drop, and Roll

If you or your clothes catch fire, do not run – this will intensify the flames.

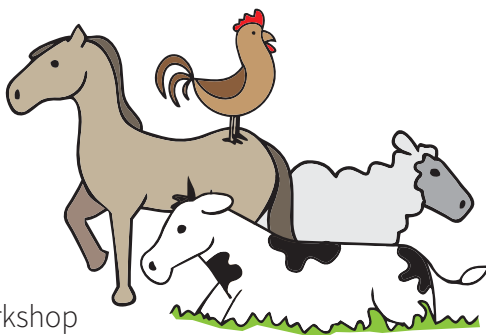
- 1. STOP:** Cease all movement immediately.
- 2. DROP:** Drop to the ground and cover your face with your hands.
- 3. ROLL:** Roll back and forth multiple times to smother the flames.

Planning for emergencies with animals

A clear, well practised plan reduces panic and improves safety.

- **Preparation:** Keep headcollars and lead ropes beside each barn or stable, and ensure all employees know how to safely evacuate the premises.

Ensure every stable, barn and workshop has a working fire extinguisher.



- **Evacuation areas:** Identify safe, secure areas where animals can be evacuated to, away from the fire. Loose animals can be dangerous and obstruct emergency services.
- **Evacuation order:** If safe to do so, remove the animals that are closest to the fire first. Stay calm, work quickly, and never put yourself at risk. Close doors behind you to prevent animals from running back inside.
- **Location details:** Ensure everyone on site knows the full address of the site to give emergency services should you need them. The what3words app provides an exact location, which is especially useful for emergency services trying to locate you.



- **Access:** Keep access routes clear at all times. If possible, send someone to the entrance to guide emergency services.

The British Animal Rescue and Trauma Care Association provide further helpful guidance on emergency planning: bartacic.org/resource/fire-evacuation-owning-your-fire-plan/



Prevention measures

Reducing risks helps avoid emergencies:

- Maintain horseboxes and trailers, especially flooring
- Keep field fencing secure, maintained and appropriate
- Fence off deep mud, ponds, streams, or other potential hazards. We frequently attend rescues where animals have entered water for a drink and been unable to get out.
- Keep stables well-maintained and swept out regularly to prevent contamination and the buildup of combustible fluids that may transfer between equipment, workers and animals



Cheshire's Animal Rescue Teams

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service has two specialist Large Animal Rescue (LAR) teams, based at Knutsford and Bollington.

Trained by the British Animal Rescue and Trauma Association (BARTA), they use specialist equipment to rescue animals from mud, water, ditches, entrapment, and overturned vehicles. Their priority is a safe, calm, efficient rescue with minimal distress to the animal.

From April 2024 to March 2025, we attended 22 horse rescues:

- 7 from water filled ditches
- 3 from horseboxes or trailers
- 4 from entanglement in gates and fences
- 4 from deep mud
- 1 from entrapment in a feeder
- 3 cast in stables



If You Need Our Help

- **Dial 999** and ask for the Fire and Rescue.
- **Give an exact location.** Using **what3words** will help us locate you more precisely and quickly.
- **Ensure access routes are clear** and, if possible, have someone meet crews at the entrance.
- **Call your vet**
Sedation may be required before rescue for everyone's safety.
- **Manage other horses**
Keep them out of the rescue area, unless asked to bring a calm companion to reassure a distressed animal – particularly horses.
- **Have machinery available if possible**
Tractors or lifting equipment may be needed, but do not bring them into the rescue zone until instructed.

Above all, stay calm - your animals will respond to and mirror your behaviour.

Useful information and contacts

Free practical advice on stable and barn fire safety is available on our website: cheshirefire.gov.uk/your-safety/outdoor-safety/barn-and-stable-safety

For more information on animal rescue training and techniques, visit: www.bartacic.org

Police and crime

Cheshire Police (non-emergency): 101 | cheshire.police.uk

If you have witnessed or been the victim of a crime that is not an emergency, please report it to Cheshire Police online or by calling 101 any time.

Crimestoppers UK: 0800 555 111 | crimestoppers-uk.org

Crimestoppers UK's free, confidential support line is open 24/7 and ensures complete anonymity when passing information to the police.

Local councils

Support is available with matters such as planning, environmental health, building regulations, and emergency preparedness. Visit your local council's website to find out what guidance and services are available to help you manage fire risks and improve safety on your premises.

Cheshire East Council:
0300 123 5500
cheshireeast.gov.uk

Halton Borough Council:
0303 333 4300
halton.gov.uk

Cheshire West and Chester Council:
0300 123 8123
cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Warrington Borough Council:
01925 443322
warrington.gov.uk

Important information

Fire muster point	
Full address	
what3words	
Owner/manager contact details	
Out of hours/ backup contact	
Lead Health and Safety contact	
Local Authority details	
Site Manager	
Building owner/ facilities management	
Utility emergency contact	
Fire Marshals and Wardens	
First aiders	

Location of fire extinguishing materials: (e.g. main entrance, ground floor corridor, kitchen area)	
Number of employees on site	
Typical visitor numbers	
Number of floors	
Main entrances and exits	
Emergency exits	
Location of electrical isolation switches	
Location of gas shut-off valves	
Location of sprinkler systems (if installed)	
Refuge point locations	

Last reviewed			
Reviewed by			
Next review due			



**Test your smoke
alarms weekly**

In the event of a fire



**GET OUT
STAY OUT
CALL 999**

If your clothes catch fire



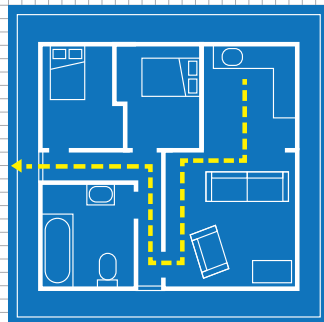
STOP



DROP



ROLL



**Plan your escape route
and make sure everyone
knows what to do in an
emergency**

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service

Sadler Road, Winsford, Cheshire
CW7 2FQ

Tel: 01606 868700

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