

# A Serious Double Whammy!

CEDAR FALLS EQUESTRIAN CENTER GETS HIT BY NOT ONLY A TORNADO, BUT ALSO THE FLOODS.

[www.cfequestriancenter.com](http://www.cfequestriancenter.com) - Deb DeVries

On May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2008, a serious double whammy was literally beginning to brew.

What started out as a stellar day, with family and friends at our house for Charla's high school graduation reception, went seriously bad. We had just returned from the ceremony at UNI and had made the decision to bring the horses into the barn because of the constant thunder and lightning from the dark clouds that were looming to the NW of our property. We certainly did not expect what happened in the next five minutes. We knew nothing of the tornado that was at that very moment tearing its way through Parkersburg and New Hartford. Some of us were standing in the doorway at the west end of the barn admiring the swirling clouds and commenting on how much they looked like they could be a tornado. Then as we watched, it dropped to the ground and bounced back up. Jaws dropped as it

swooped down a second time, stayed on the ground and headed straight toward us. We RAN! As it turned out, this was the same tornado that had minutes before traveled from Parkersburg to New Hartford and down Beaver Valley Road and it had now crossed the Cedar River. The river had caused it to lose some energy so when it hit us it was thankfully still trying to gain more power. A neighbor, Chris Jenson, shot a video just up the road from us (Big Woods Road), and you can watch it at: [http://www.courierwebcasts.com/play.php?vid\\_id=986&file=bigwoodsroadvideo.flv](http://www.courierwebcasts.com/play.php?vid_id=986&file=bigwoodsroadvideo.flv). The trees to the left are CFEC's north property line.

For several weeks after the tornado, the first thing everyone saw when they came on the yard was the camper that was destroyed by the tornado. My sister, Julie, and her son, Tommy, were in the camper when we saw the tornado coming. After a lot of panic and screaming, everyone made it safely to the house and into the basement with only a

few seconds to spare. The sirens went off as we were running to the house. The whole thing was over in about 20 seconds. (And yes, I can honestly say that the closest sound I can relate to a tornado is that of a freight train passing). The camper was rolled over Julie's car.

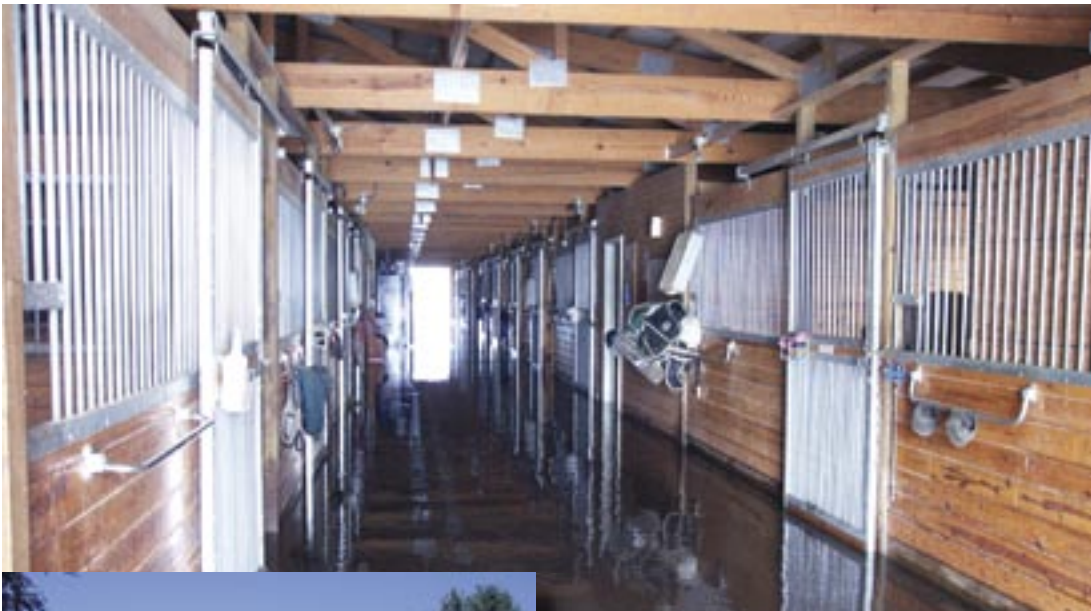
The house was protected by some very large blue spruce trees that just slowly laid down around the house. Other than loose siding and a hole in the shingles on the roof, there wasn't any damage to the house.

The horse business, on the other hand, suffered lots of damage. We lost several hay racks, a run-in shed and 2 cupolas from the main barn. All four hayracks were rolled across the field; one was picked up and dropped several times, breaking a front wheel off at the spindle. The flat bed part of that hayrack was shredded and impaled into the pond and every rain we got, a little more of it floated to the top.

The barns held against the storm but sustained a lot of damage throughout each of the structures. The builders are wishing it would have just come apart because it would be a lot easier to rebuild than to try and figure out how to fix it. We have a lot of loose roofing, cracked trusses and columns and the entire arena leans to the east. Thankfully, the only loss of life was our tom cat named Payne. It could easily have been much worse.

The flood came two weeks later, on June 10<sup>th</sup>. They did not predict even close to what we ended up getting

Continued on page 52



ABOVE: These three photos were taken after the water had started to recede. It was so much worse!

BOTTOM LEFT: The storm-damaged camper in front of the barn, on its side, is now flooded. Notice that the cupolas are missing from the barn.

## ***“Double Whammy;”*** *continued from page 30*

(we got 6' over what they had predicted!). We have 52 acres, which is mostly in the upper level of the 500 yr. flood plain. I also have some land that isn't in any flood plain, so I rode Teah out to look for some drier land to take the horses to and even "dry land" had water over her knees. We had maybe two acres up in the far corner that was not under water.

The water backed up along the road in front of our house until it could go over it. The road then washed out on both sides of us, effectively cutting us off from the outside world for a few days. That was the least of our worries.

The house basement was seeping water, and then suddenly the water rose another 3' in about 20 minutes and burst through the windows, buckled the wall, popped out the mortar plugs for the old septic system and well and filled the basement to within ¼" of the rafters. Kevin was in the house trying to save what he could, which wasn't much since we had not planned for a flood of this magnitude at all.

Meanwhile, I was in the barn trying to save what I could out there. The water was 2' deep inside. I had kittens swimming for their lives and pallets of bedding floating away. I caught what I could and shoved it into a stall so the current wouldn't take it out. Yes, there was a pretty strong current running from east to west. Later that day we had to ferry Pete, the pony, to the "road island" where she spent the next 2 ½ days. Kevin and I each had a lead rope attached to the side of her halter so we could hang on to her if the current picked her little body up and tried to wash her away. She had a few deep steps but she pretty much maintained her own footing all the way out.

I could tell you a long boring story about how the horses were faring in the stalls but what eventually happened was that the stall flooring, which was packed limestone, broke up. The water was running under the building as well as through it. The horses started panicking as they were falling into holes in the stalls as much as a foot deep. As soon as we could manage to push open the door to the back barn we waded as many as we could to the back barn where the stall flooring is concrete. Did I mention the water was gushing up through the saw cuts in the concrete? That was sort of scary to lead the horses over. There were also geysers in the indoor arena... so much for my footing...

There were horses that had to stay outside through the entire ordeal also. They did ok, for the most part. We floated hay out to them in muck buckets and water in garbage cans lined with clean garbage bags. There were a few horses that had  
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mental meltdowns but no major physical issues. I'm sure if we would have been forced to evacuate and left them, there would have been some severe medical issues and possibly one or two that would have been life-threatening.

By the evening of the 12<sup>th</sup>, the water had receded from the barn aisles and on the 13<sup>th</sup>, we were able to shovel out the stalls, add some dry bedding and put some of the horses out into their turn-out pens. The basement stayed full for another week while we waited for the water table to drop so we could safely pump it out without collapsing the walls. The freezer had floated and then tipped over, spilling its contents out into the water. Needless to say, the house reeked of rotting meat. We slept in the house upstairs in Charla's room with all the windows open every night.

Speaking of Charla, she was not here. We sent her out with the last Payloader to find alternate shelter. She initially was taken to the shelter that was set up at UNI. She then got a ride to a friend's house and stayed there. She couldn't get back to help us for several days. She did pick up a generator and a sump pump at TSC where she works and got us a nice discount so that was helpful.

June 28, 2008

As of this writing, we have electricity back for the most part. The city condemned our house so we couldn't get anything hooked back up until we were inspected to verify that it was safe to let the power company come in to turn us on. The generator was running every few hours to keep the refrigerator cold and run a light and a few other small appliances. I don't ever want to eat another meal by candle light again! Nor do I want to go camping.....

We hoped to have gas (and hot water!) on Monday. The water heater, furnace, washer, dryer, freezer and a second frig were all lost in the basement. The furnace was a 51-year-old boiler which we had been thinking of replacing anyway. The water heater was also pretty old and Kevin had talked about it being partly full of sand and was planning to replace it sometime this summer. The washer and dryer were pretty new. We didn't plan to replace them all at once!

We had a washer donated to us very shortly after the flood and since we were able to maintain electricity in the barns we set it up out there to wash all the tons of flood-soaked things. We saved a lot of stuff that we probably would have had to throw out if it hadn't been washed before it molded. We are very thankful to Rev. Tom and Ruby Wagoner for donating that machine. A few days later, someone else donated an older dryer which we eventually got connected to power in the basement. The new water

heater has been installed and we waited four days for the city to come back and inspect us again so we could get the gas turned back on. We do not have the furnace replaced yet but hopefully we will be able to do that before winter.

I can't wait to be able to take a shower at home! We've been going to a friend's house to shower (thanks Sarah!). Kevin has been going to the church to shower before work this last week. He finally went back to work on Monday (the 23<sup>rd</sup>). There is a lot more that I am not including (was that a sigh of relief?).

The hay field was almost a complete loss as far as the crop goes. The beans are trying to perk up except where they are buried under sand dunes and there is no hope of replanting in a sand dune anyway. FEMA and SBA have been knocking on my door many times asking if we are satisfied with their response. My response is always the same. No.....

Many thanks to Kris Brimm and Sarah Soliday; also to Julie and Tom Stancliffe, who have been tremendous! Tom brought his tractor and mowed down the stadium arena and around the dressage ring and made the whole place look less "flooded." It was amazing how just mowing down all that brown junk made everyone feel better (or at least me). Julie spent a couple of days cleaning flooded tack. Cheryl Vuk has been helping as much as she can. She and Mary Nadeau cleaned the crud from the chain link fence around the house. That was really a mental boost to not have to look at that ugly reminder every time we went to or from the house.

I had six college kids from the Quad Cities one day and they were awesome! They scrubbed off all the jumps and got them out of the jumble in the barn and onto the jump field. It was really nice to have them help. Fortunately, the jumps were all in the indoor arena or still stored in the hay barn at the time of the flood, or they would have all floated away. The water at one point was higher than the fence posts in the fields, so there would have been nothing to stop them.

A lot of engineers from JD PEC came out one Saturday and helped get all of the flooded and heating hay bales out of the barn and emptied out the oats that were stored in the stall in the back barn. That really stunk and it was incredibly HOT! They also set the pallets of bedding upright again. They had floated and tipped onto the haystack. Those things weighed around 1600# each; it's amazing that they floated!

I lost a bunch of horse bedding so if anyone down south of us along the Cedar River saw some plastic bags of horse bedding floating by, they were mine.

The barn is a mess; stuff is everywhere

***Continued on page 54***

**AHC; Continued from page 53**

which would have shortened the capitol gains holding period for horses from two years to one year, was not included in the final conference version of the Farm Bill passed by Congress.

**Equine Farmers and Ranchers Eligible for Emergency Loans**

Another provision in the bill makes horse breeders eligible for the first time for emergency federal loans following a disaster. This change will include "equine farmers and ranchers" within the group of producers eligible for these federal emergency loans. "Horse breeders have not been eligible for these loans, which have been available to other livestock producers for some time," said Hickey. "Horse breeders suffer losses from hurricanes, drought, ice, floods and other natural disasters just like other livestock producers do. This provision will end the disparate treatment of horses and horse breeders by making them eligible for emergency loans under the same conditions and limits as other livestock producers. Again, the horse industry owes thanks to Senator McConnell for his efforts in passing this provision."

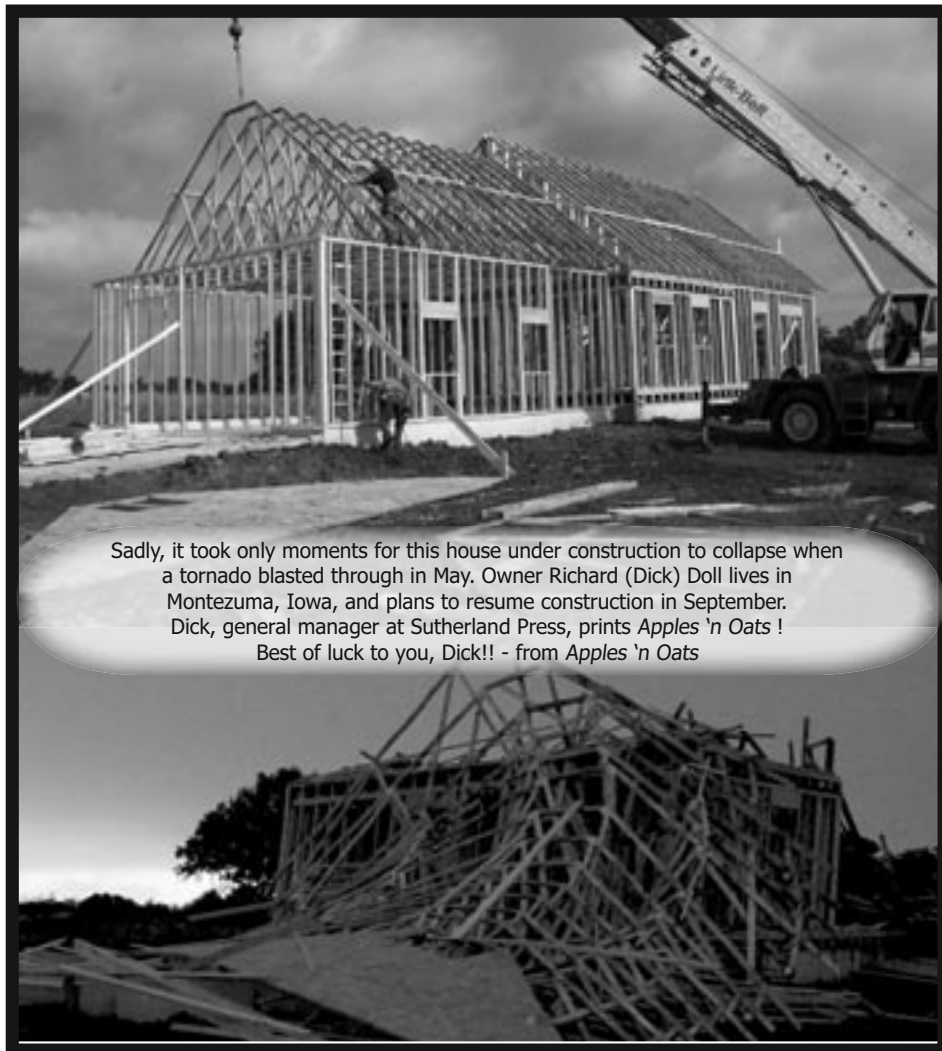
**Horses Specifically Included as Livestock in Disaster Assistance Program**

The Farm Bill also includes a new permanent disaster assistance program that will provide relief funds to farmers and ranchers who suffer losses in areas that are declared disaster areas by USDA. This program is intended to make funds available sooner following a disaster. Horses are specifically included within the definition of livestock eligible for the program. "The inclusion of horses was pursuant to an amendment offered by Senator Bunning to the Senate Farm Bill. The provision was accepted by the Conference Committee," said Hickey. "This is important to the horse industry and we appreciate his efforts."

The horse industry has been working for these last two changes for some time. The industry is now treated like other livestock producers with respect to federal emergency programs.

As the national association representing all segments of the horse industry in Washington, D.C., the American Horse Council works daily to represent equine interests and opportunities. Organized in 1969, the AHC promotes and protects the industry by communicating with Congress, federal agencies, the media and the industry on behalf of all horse related interests each and every day.

The AHC is member supported by individuals and organizations representing virtually every facet of the horse world from owners, breeders, veterinarians, farriers, breed registries and horsemen's associations to horse shows, race tracks, rodeos, commercial suppliers and state horse councils.



Sadly, it took only moments for this house under construction to collapse when a tornado blasted through in May. Owner Richard (Dick) Doll lives in Montezuma, Iowa, and plans to resume construction in September. Dick, general manager at Sutherland Press, prints Apples 'n Oats ! Best of luck to you, Dick!! - from Apples 'n Oats

**“Double Whammy;” continued from page 52**

but I'm starting to figure out where people put it and I'm trying to get it at least a little organized so that I can find it again. There are no horses in the front barn and there won't be until we can fix the floors. That will depend on how much hay I can get bought first. There is really no money to repair the flood damage or buy hay. There are so many holes in the barn roof that I have trouble finding a place to store any hay we DO have. When we decided to cut the hay in the field, we found a dead carp and a couple drowned pocket gophers out there. If there is a silver lining in that cloud, it would be that we got rid of a bunch of gophers! "chuckle"

I still keep finding things that need to be fixed/cleaned. Most recently I picked up my boot bag and found my Dehners (English show boots) covered in flood mold. YUK!!! I kept thinking that the water couldn't get deeper, and then it would....after a while you just lose interest in the depth and you just give up and let the water take what it wants.

Our house was finally "un-condemned" the last week in July, we have hot water and the air conditioner works!!!! I still have to haul laundry to the barn to wash it and back in to the house to get it dried but at least it gets clean. We did make about 400 bales of first cutting hay (for a loss of over 1,900 bales), the 2<sup>nd</sup> cutting looks to be exceptionally good but nowhere near enough to make up for the loss of so much of the first cutting.

One of the horses did pick up something related to the flood and developed a high fever and symptoms of kidney failure about 2 ½ weeks later. We treated her with antibiotics and she seems to have recovered satisfactorily.

Meanwhile, I am trying to keep working horses, teaching lessons and caring for the animals on my own. I had hoped to be riding my new Friesian stallion by now but it just isn't in the cards right now. I sincerely appreciate all of the help we have received since the first disaster struck in May and I wish I could think of an adequate way to repay each of the wonderful people that have made the effort to help out in whatever way they could.