

waterfrontline

The water's edge is the front line.

The animals we lost.

In the Missouri River floods of 2019, hundreds of millions of dollars in farm income was lost as the area was under floodwaters for 9 months. People died in the initial surge as dams broke, and floods swept across towns, bridges, and farms. But people tend to think huge losses are covered by insurance even when they're not, and values that large can become abstract.

If we've learned one thing from watching the reaction to the Australian wildfires of 2019-2020, it's that the loss of animals strikes even harder for some reason. Perhaps it is because people have agency, a greater ability to control their destiny and environment, while animals can't know what is coming next. They're fenced in, and then the flood comes. And when they die in an accident and lie rotting for a week their death doesn't bring any positive benefit to anyone; it's just a loss all around. They float downstream and land in someone else's field, piling on the issues another flood victim has to weather.

So here are a few of their stories. Please click the links for the full stories.

From Winslow,
Nebraska.
March 19, 2019:

The loss of 686 out of
700 hogs.

[https://
www.cbsnews.com/
news/farmers-deadly-
midwest-flooding-
fremont-
nebraska-2019-03-19/](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/farmers-deadly-midwest-flooding-fremont-nebraska-2019-03-19/)

Doug and Eric Alberts are trying to round up the surviving hogs on their 9-acre farm in Fremont, Nebraska. There aren't many. The family estimates they were only able to save 14 out of 700 of their livestock.

The father and son have worked for three years to build this business. Then, a few days ago, the water came.

"About a 3-foot wall ... 100-foot wide ... just flowing over the road," Doug recalled.

Within minutes, 7 feet of water covered their farm.



CBS NEWS

When the men returned Tuesday, they found dead hogs everywhere.

Nebraska scrambles to clear away cattle carcasses scattered by flooding

Nebraska, as reported in Evansville, Indiana, April 1, 2019:

Cattle crowd onto a small patch of high ground to try to avoid drowning in the floodwaters.

https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2019/04/10/Nebraska-scrambles-to-clear-away-cattle-carcasses-scattered-by-flooding/6501554855042/

By Jessie Higgins



"Farmers are supposed to [dispose of their animals], but they don't know where all their cows are," said John Hansen, the president of the Nebraska Farmers Union. "And there are folks down river who have dead cows on their property that aren't theirs. So, it's awful."

"My great, great grandfather homesteaded here and we've been building up the place for five generations. Now it's destroyed," laments Ruzicka. "But there are a bunch of wonderful people trying to help us – neighbors helping look after our cattle, digging through the mud and ice and trying to help us salvage something."

Verdigre, Nebraska,
March 2019.

40 miles downriver
from the Spencer
dam break.



Photo by Lorie Kreycik Knigge | Despite desperately trying to move cattle, the Ruzicka family lost 12 breeding bulls and 15 calves. A dam broke upstream because of ice jams.

<https://www.beefmagazine.com/disaster/catastrophic-nebraska-flooding-hits-ranchers-hard-costs-estimated-1-billion>



Stable owners doing their best to care for horses trapped by flood

Waterloo, Nebraska,

March 17, 2019

<https://www.wowt.com/content/news/Stable-owners-doing-their-best-to-care-for-horses-trapped-by-flood-507271381.html>



By Mike McKnight | Posted: Sun 12:53 PM, Mar 17, 2019 | Updated: Sun 5:38 PM, Mar 17, 2019

Broken Bow,
Nebraska,

March 21, 2019

<https://www.tsln.com/news/cattlemen-in-crisis-flooded-with-no-place-to-go/>



The oldest daughter of Karina Jones had two bred heifers. This is one of them standing over her dead calf. "My kids know a lot about life and have learned more than their fair share about death in their time," she said. Photo by Karina Jones.

To end on a positive note:

How do you feed stranded cattle whose unreachable fields are flooded?

If you're the Nebraska and Minnesota National Guard, you deploy Chinook helicopters to deliver hay to the stranded animals. Farmers from neighboring states donated the hay.

<https://www.militarytimes.com/video/2019/03/26/chinooks-drop-hay-to-feed-livestock-stranded-by-floods/>

