

Farm fire safety

Simple actions to protect livestock, property, and livelihoods

Barn fires can be devastating, destroying years of hard work, livestock, and equipment in moments. However, most are preventable. Through proactive planning and consistent safety practices, you can significantly reduce your risk and protect your livelihood.

How fires start.

All fires need three elements to start and spread:

- Oxygen: Barns and farm buildings are well-ventilated, allowing fires to grow quickly.
- Fuel: Farms contain many combustible materials, including wood structures, hay, straw, grain, fuel, and chemicals.
- Heat: Common heat sources include electrical equipment, machinery friction, open flames, sunlight, and chemical reactions.

Did you know?

- Electrical/mechanical problems are the leading known cause of barn fires in Ontario.
- Nearly 50% of barn fires are so severe the cause can't be determined.
- Dust, cobwebs, and clutter can ignite near heat or electrical equipment.

Top 5 ways to reduce fire risk.

- Keep barns clean and free of dust and clutter.
- Inspect electrical systems regularly.
- Refuel equipment outdoors and away from buildings.
- Store hay, feed and fuels separately.
- Keep fire extinguishers accessible and maintained.



Small steps prevent big fires.



Barn fire prevention checklist

Follow the checklist below to support a safer barn environment and reduce fire risks.

Fire Planning

- ☐ Written fire safety plan reviewed annually
- ☐ Risk reduction assessment completed (insurer or fire department)
- ☐ Training and drills conducted
- ☐ Visitor orientation in place

Housekeeping

- ☐ Combustibles kept 1 m (3 ft) away from electrical systems
- ☐ Dust, cobwebs, and loose hay/straw removed routinely
- ☐ Exits and driveways kept clear year-round

Electrical Safety

- ☐ No long-term use of extension cords or power bars
- ☐ Licensed electrician inspections scheduled and documented
- ☐ Wiring and panels protected with conduit or covers

Hot Works

- ☐ Hot works performed outdoors when possible
- ☐ Combustibles removed; ventilation ensured
- ☐ Non-combustible pads/shields used
- ☐ 30-minute post-work fire watch completed

Fire Separations

- ☐ Fire walls, separations, and attic stops intact
- ☐ Penetrations sealed

Motorized Equipment & Fuels

- ☐ Equipment stored away from livestock and bedding
- ☐ Refueling done outdoors; engines shut off and cooled
- ☐ Fuels/solvents stored in designated, ventilated areas

Hay & Ventilation

- ☐ Only dry hay stored; temperatures monitored
- ☐ Adequate ventilation in storage areas

Smoking & Yard

- ☐ No smoking in/near barns; signage posted
- ☐ Brush/debris cleared; vegetation trimmed near buildings

Extinguishers & Communication

- ☐ Fire extinguishers installed, serviced, and personnel trained
- ☐ Neighbours aware of farm address
- ☐ Clear directions available for emergency responders

Heaters

- ☐ Agricultural-rated heaters installed and maintained
- ☐ Clearances maintained; combustibles kept away
- ☐ Portable heaters never left unattended



For more information:

[Ontario.ca/PreventFarmFires](https://ontario.ca/preventfarmfires)

[Ontario.ca/FireMarshal](https://ontario.ca/firemarshal)

Contact your local fire department

Minor checks. Major safety.