

Strategic placement of Emergency Response to Accidents Involving Livestock (ERAIL) response trailers and subsequent trailer trainings across Michigan

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Situational Need Assessment

Livestock-related emergencies can occur unexpectedly, requiring quick and effective response to ensure both animal welfare and public safety. The Emergency Response to Accidents Involving Livestock (ERAIL) program, led by Michigan State University Extension (MSU Extension), aims to support Michigan's animal agriculture industry by providing resources and training for first responders, animal haulers, and local stakeholders on how to manage livestock-related accidents effectively.



Picture 1

Picture1: First responders handling horses at an ERAIL training.

Objectives

- 1.To strategically place ERAIL trailers throughout Michigan near known livestock transportation routes.
2. To deliver a series of ERAIL trailer training events that are designed to a) create awareness that this respective resource exists and how to access it and b) familiarize first responders with the trailer equipment by providing scenario-based activities while utilizing the ERAIL trailer and equipment as a central educational tool.



Picture 2: ERAIL trailer



Picture 3

Picture 3: First responders haltering cow and sheep manikins.

Educational Outreach

In 2024, the MSU Extension ERAIL team worked closely with county partners to strategically place five ERAIL trailers throughout Michigan. This brings the total to eight trailers placed across the state. Counties where ERAIL trailers were placed in 2024 included: Monroe, Midland, Berrien, Lapeer and Gratiot counties. Each location held a ribbon cutting ceremony with stakeholders to celebrate the arrival of this resource within their communities.

Trailers

Current trailer locations:

Otsego County – Gaylord
Midland County – Midland
Gratiot County – Ithaca
Lapeer County – Lapeer
Jackson County – Jackson*
Branch County – Coldwater
Berrien County – Benton Harbor
Monroe County – Monroe

ERAIL trailers are a part of Animal Control except in Jackson County – Liberty Twp Fire Dept.

Tentative trailer placement:

Central Upper Peninsula

Areas needing partnership:

West Michigan – Kent, Allegan, Ottawa

Figure 1. ERAIL trailer locations

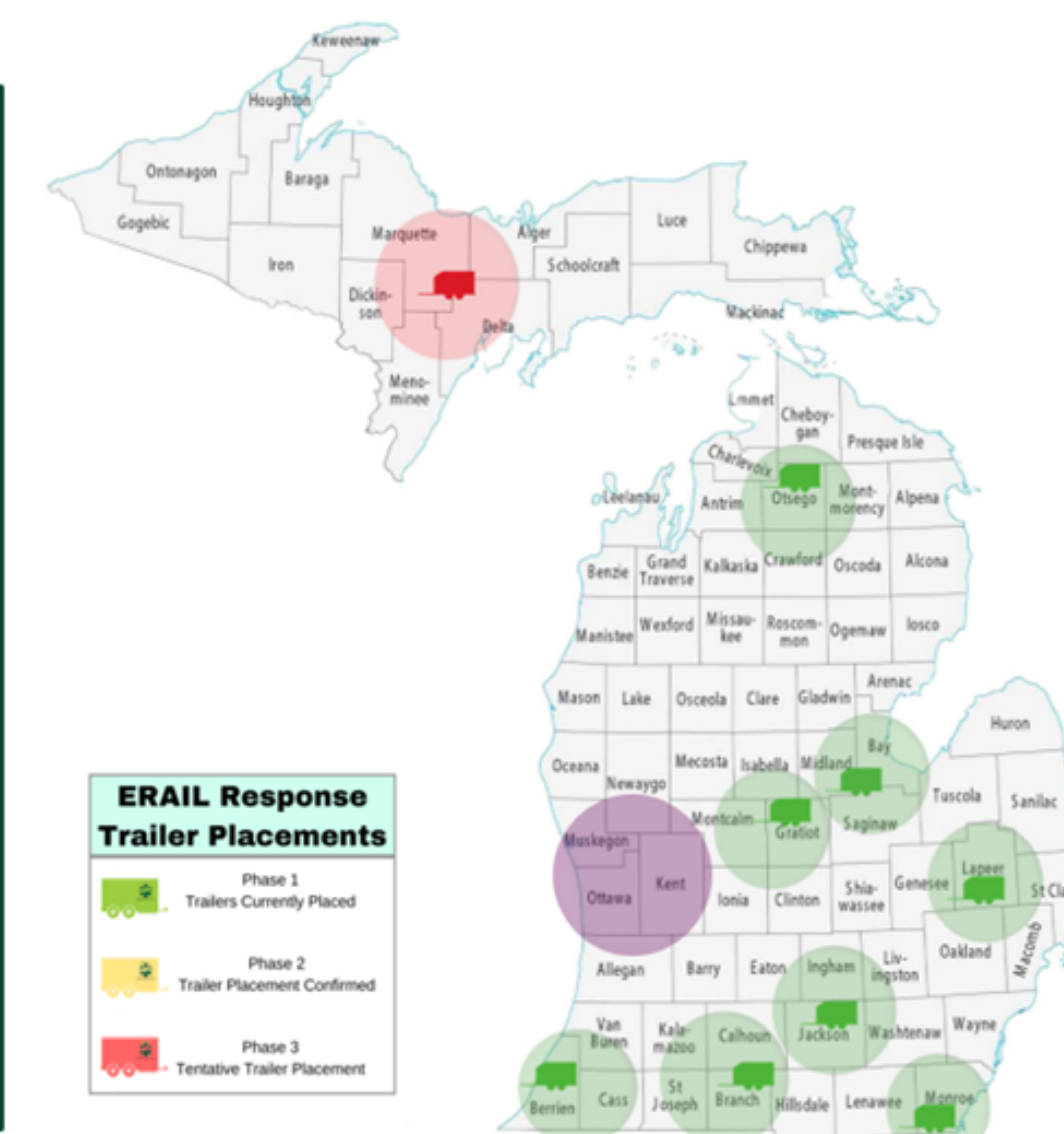


Figure 1: Locations of ERAIL trailers placed throughout Michigan's lower peninsula (green), a planned trailer placement in the upper peninsula (red) scheduled for Spring 2025.

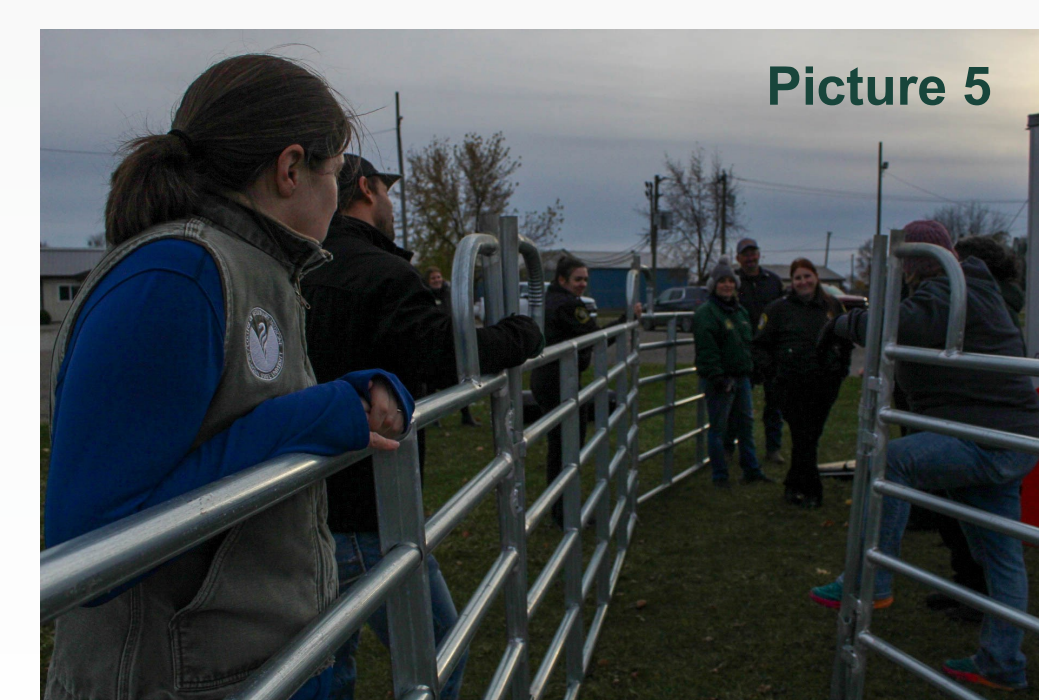
Along with the placement of these response trailers, equipped with over 75 pieces specialized livestock and emergency equipment, MSU Extension has delivered a series of highly successful ERAIL trailer trainings. Through trailer training sessions, first responders, animal haulers, and local stakeholders learn to use the equipment, handle animals safely, manage media and bystanders, and work through realistic accident scenarios. Additionally, mutual aid agreements between counties ensure broader access to resources, enhancing community preparedness and response to livestock emergencies across Michigan.



Picture 4

Picture 4. ERAIL trailer ribbon cutting event with multiple stakeholder groups participating.

Picture 5. Program participants setting up equipment during trailer training.



Picture 5

Results

- Since 2021, seven ERAIL trailer training sessions have been offered with 127 participants completing the trailer training.

Post survey responses indicate:

- 96% of participants increased their knowledge of the ERAIL program, including where trailers are located, how to access the trailer and use the equipment.
- Currently, ERAIL trailers have been deployed to respond to accidents involving livestock on multiple occasions throughout Michigan.



Picture 6

Picture 6: Emergency response scene of livestock transportation trailer loaded with sows laying on its side, down an embankment off a major highway in Michigan.

- Quotes from first responders:
 - “I don’t know whose idea that trailer was but it was amazing, we couldn’t have done this response nearly as fast if we didn’t have this trailer, we need one in every county.”
 - “The training was very useful. The firefighters and deputies understand the need to use their equipment to block the view of the one lane of traffic still moving. Was off the highway in 2 hours.”

Impact

Cooperation and coordination between various organizations and individuals has brought the ERAIL response trailer resource to Michigan communities to ensure public safety related to the accident scene, aiding in mitigation of animal welfare concerns and equipping first responders and the animal agriculture industry with the necessary tools when responding to accidents involving livestock.

Acknowledgements

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