

We all know 2020 has been a challenging year, and it is far from over. At press time, there are two tropical systems churning in the Atlantic, expected to reach tropical storm and maybe even hurricane strength. I hope they both head on out to sea, away from threats to land.

With both the storms and the year in mind, there are two stories in this month's paper that I would like to direct your attention to – the story on preparing for your pets in the event of an emergency on page 3 and the one on our first cases of EEE posted above.

For a lot of people, pets are like family. I know for me and my wife, Sharon, that is very true when it comes to our two dogs. I sincerely hope we do not any more hurricanes to deal with this year, but the season is not over and experts predicted it would be a very active one.

It's always good to have a plan in place for your pets in the event you must leave your home suddenly. The article offers some good suggestions.

A well-made point in the article talks about pets picking up on their owners' stress and anxiety and that anything we can do to relieve our stress, will be good for our pets, too. Be sure to check it out.

Reducing the risks of mosquito-borne illnesses is something we can do something about, too.

We anticipated that this could be a very active mosquito season because of a relatively mild winter and a rainy spring, and that seems to be proving true. We have already doubled our cases of EEE cases from 2019, and we are not even close to the end of the season. If you are an equine owner, I urge you to consider vaccinating your horses and be proactive around your farm and stables to remove standing water that can be breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

Mosquitoes are not the only pest we need to be cautious about. Ticks are increasingly creating problems for humans, and one tick in particular - the Asian longhorned tick - is a significant threat to livestock.

The Asian longhorned tick was first found in North Carolina in 2018. Last year it was spotted in four counties in the state and a recent report indicated it has now been found in 10 counties, primarily in the Western part of the state.

The tick can reproduce without a mate, with the female laying between 2,000 and 4,000 eggs a year, meaning its numbers increase very quickly.

Some people refer to this tick as a vampire tick because it can kill an animal by draining its blood. Five cows were killed last year in North Carolina by this tick. The animals were found with thousands of ticks on them.

I would encourage you to monitor your livestock closely and be on the lookout for this tick.