



# State Animal Disaster Plan

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Florida's citizens)

### Final Comments

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“County veterinarians, Humane Society personnel and animal control staffs are the first line of response to local animal emergencies.”

## Introduction

The establishment of an animal disaster relief plan will serve as a blueprint which can be used and modified in the event of a disaster. This would allow the relief effort to proceed smoothly so that the greatest part of volunteers' energy could be used constructively to provide emergency and supportive care to animal victims of a disaster.

Veterinary medicine and animal care resources in emergency preparedness, response and recovery are important to public health and welfare. This includes small and large animal care, use of facilities and displaced pet and livestock assistance.

The destruction of buildings, fences and other enclosures may lead to the release of animals that subsequently roam about unrestricted, endangering the health and safety of humans. The unrestricted roaming of domestic animals leads to increased interaction with wildlife and with the human population. Such interaction enhances the probability that these animals will become vectors of disease transmission and potential reservoirs of pathogenic agents otherwise confined to the wildlife population. As a result, the probability of human exposure to zoonotic diseases is enhanced.

Animal bites are a major concern because of the risk of rabies transmission, as well as pain, anxiety, disfigurement and wound infections by organisms. Since stray animals present a significant threat to humans, they should be caught and confined by designated authorities in order to minimize risk of injury to humans and to minimize the probability of zoonotic disease transmission. Injured animals found to be in pain or suffering may need to be euthanized.

County veterinarians, Humane Society personnel and animal control staffs residing in a county are the first line of response to local animal emergencies. If an emergency incapacitates local response capability, veterinary, Humane Society and animal control resources from adjacent counties may be requested through the Emergency Management Agency (EMA) Coordinator.

Your state College of Veterinary Medicine, state Veterinary Medical Association, state and county animal control organizations and humane organizations all represent veterinarians, veterinary technicians and allied qualified personnel with animal experience. A coordinator for this vast network will maintain liaison with the

emergency management agencies, public health agencies, animal control agencies and humane organizations. An animal disaster relief committee with representatives from each networking group can coordinate veterinary involvement, veterinary technician service and animal care personnel with the state management agency.

The role of veterinarians in the private sector is to be prepared to play a major role in disaster situations by making their expertise, supplies, equipment and premises available as both human and animal medical aid posts. Veterinary hospitals which feature current drugs, surgical instruments, respirators, x-ray capability and sterilization equipment are adequately equipped to address life-threatening emergencies involving the human population.

Private veterinary practitioners are in an ideal position to play a role in the surveillance of any abnormalities, deaths or illnesses found in animal populations. In this way, animal populations can serve as sentinels during a disaster situation.

## Objectives

The two primary objectives of the veterinary community are focused on the organization of professional and volunteer skills and the delivery of medical care. The first objective is to provide an orderly chain of command for implementation of state and county disaster responses, including assignment of duties and placement of volunteer personnel in areas of greatest need. The second objective is to provide emergency medical care for all animals involved in a disaster situation.

# Emergency Plan

## Phase 1

Phase one is the planning period, involving the formation of a county animal relief committee and the development of a county plan with a chain of command. Phase one should begin well in advance of any seasonal disaster, for example, hurricane, spring flood or severe winter storm. During this period, zones and sub-zones within the county must be determined based on:



- Communications
- Topography
- Human population
- Animal population

An estimation of animal populations in zones and sub-zones should be accomplished in phase one. Dog, cat, livestock and threatened or endangered species populations must be assessed.

To estimate the dog population for a specific zone or sub-zone, find the number of households in the area and multiply this number by 57.7%. For the cat population, find the number of households in the area and multiply this number by 60.1%

Phase one also consists of identifying the effects of natural disasters. A chain of command that coordinates with existing governmental agencies should be developed.

- Establish duties or responsibilities for all available animal organizations within zones and sub-zones.
- Develop an organizational flow chart.
- Prioritize duties and responsibilities.
- Maintain control of public relations and media.
- Centralize command.
- Obtain security for pertinent areas.
- Establish living arrangements and schedule for workers.

## Duties and Responsibilities of the Supply Coordinator

- Secure acquisition and storage.
- Prioritize incoming requests and supply demands.
- Establish and maintain appropriate paperwork and data to assist in improving handling of supplies for future situations.

## Duties and Responsibilities of the Disaster Animal Relief Director

- Secure vehicles to get personnel into affected areas.
- Make sure vehicles and personnel are supplied with proper identification.
- Have adequate supplies and able personnel available to handle emergency situations at the scene.
- Be able to transport to emergency triage or to holding facilities.
- Centralize holding stations, preferably close to affected areas.
- Document and identify each animal treated, held or euthanized.
- Establish criteria for evacuation and possible holding areas, where necessary, by zones and sub-zones.
- Prearrange contingent backup plan for disposal of carcasses.
  - Identify before disposal.
  - Expedite for public health reasons.
  - Determine capability and responsibility of county health department to dispose of dead animals.

“As soon as possible, the professional animal community should start the relief effort.”

## Duties and Responsibilities of the Communications Coordinator

- Centralize data command.
- Coordinate incoming information for dispatch and assimilation into network.
- Report pertinent information to command for staff meetings and media.

## Phase 2

This period covers the 96 hours before the disaster occurs. If possible, alerts and warnings are issued during phase two. Animal owners should follow the guidelines set forth in phase one, ensuring safety for themselves and their families. When conditions permit, pet owners should locate, identify, evaluate and secure their animals.

As soon as feasible, the professional animal-care community should start the relief effort. There are two main categories of animals: those in need of immediate medical attention and those in need primarily of supportive care. The owners and lay community will probably administer first aid to animals in need of immediate

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care. Unfortunately, many with serious injuries will not survive unless lines of communication to a veterinarian are open, and the veterinarian is able to physically reach the animal.

Local veterinarians will be most familiar with the area's geography and animal populations and should be the backbone of the organized relief effort. They will, however, give priority to clients whenever possible, so an organized team of volunteer veterinarians and lay staff who will assist in the community is needed.

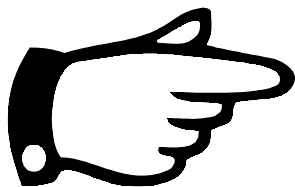
### Phase 3

This period covers the disaster's arrival and up to 96 hours after the disaster strikes. The facilities for the relief effort should be organized during the first 96 hours as follows:

- At least two large facilities should have already been secured as animal holding areas. Alternate sites should have also been selected. These areas should be known to the local and state veterinarians.
- At least two areas frequented by animal owners such as tack shops, feed stores, and show grounds could serve as central meeting areas for the transfer of information and supplies.
- One or two areas could hold animals which do not require hospitalization but require care their owners are unable to administer. These holding areas can also be used to temporarily house animals when the owner is not able to secure them. They can also be used for loose populations of animals which need to be secured until their owners are identified or until they can be relocated to a foster care facility.

### Phase 4

Phase four, or the recovery period, begins 97 hours after the disaster occurs and extends to 180 days following the disaster. It includes an animal care emergency operations plan. The county Disaster Animal Relief Committee (DARC) will be staffed by representatives of each of the animal interest groups in the county. The identified committee leader will be responsible to the EMA at the county emergency operations center.



### Objectives

- Develop a list of registered veterinary service volunteers.
- Provide EMA coordinator with a list of animal clinics and

- shelters and their supervisors.
- Develop maps of areas affected, and prepare overlays that plot locations of veterinary hospitals and clinics, animal shelters, animal control facilities and supply distribution points.
  - Establish work schedules.
  - Form mobile veterinary response teams and assign areas of responsibility. Response teams may be organized by city, county or multi-county region, depending on the extent of the disaster and the number of veterinary personnel participating.
  - Coordinate the veterinary logistical supply system including: requirements, supply sources and acquisition, fund requirements, shipping methods, storage and distribution.
  - Involve veterinary, Humane Society and animal control personnel in emergency exercises and training.
  - Determine high density animal populations at high risk in the event a disaster should occur.
  - Establish procedures for requesting military veterinary service assistance through the state veterinarian, if necessary.
  - Assist in apprehension of escaped animals.
  - Establish a local animal retrieval plan in conjunction with animal control and Humane Society personnel.
  - Establish a foster/adoption procedure in the event that lost animals cannot be reclaimed by their owners in a reasonable period of time. Agreements must be legally written to protect the rights of the original animal owners.
  - Recommend methods of proper disposal of dead animals. Coordinate with Departments of Agriculture and/or Environmental Protection.
  - Supervise prevention and control of zoonotic and food-borne diseases in coordination with the county department of health.
  - Provide health care for injured animals including priority care for search/rescue dogs.
  - Arrange for or provide food, water and temporary shelter for displaced animals.
  - Provide documentation of injuries and deaths of animals for insurance purposes.
  - Establish methods and procedures for the appropriate use and accountability of donated funds.
  - Maintain frequent communications with your state Veterinary Medical Association (VMA).
  - Establish procedures for debriefing participants and for preparing after-action reports.
  - Identify special crisis support groups.

# Organization of Animal Disaster Relief Effort

We assume a period of time elapses after the disaster when personnel and public assessments have been made, yet local services are still out of order.

## Chain of Command

“Determining who is in charge of animal relief efforts is a difficult and delicate question...”

Determining who is in charge of animal relief efforts is a difficult and delicate question because the answer depends on how severe and extensive the disaster is. Normally, the lines of authority in a local area extend from city government, county government, federal government, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and military and volunteer organizations such as the American Red Cross, Humane Societies and veterinary services.

The ultimate goal of this chain of command is to serve the people of the affected area and to provide care to the animals in the area. Depending on the extent of the disaster, the chain of command will reflect the existing structure of agencies and organizations available to provide these services. A clearly defined chain of command is needed to coordinate immediate animal relief efforts.

- Each county should appoint a qualified individual as a Disaster Animal Relief Director (DARD) for all animal species; there should also be an assistant in the event the DARD is incapacitated. There should also be a veterinarian responsible to this coordinator who is in charge of large animals and another veterinarian in charge of small animals.
- Each district should have a coordinator who is responsible for each county in his or her district.
- The state veterinarian should coordinate relief at the state level and working with district and county coordinators.
- To limit the confusion immediately after the hurricane, all organizations and individuals able to offer assistance should work within this chain of command when possible.



## Duties and Responsibilities of the Disaster Animal Relief Director (DARD)

- Appoint all coordinators.
- Coordinate veterinary relief efforts.
- Hold meetings to coordinate all sections as required.
- Make sure coordinators are following through with duties.
- Provide a budget, and seek relief funds from private sector.
- Adjust personnel as needed to accomplish relief mission.
- Coordinate relief efforts with local animal services and animal welfare groups.

## Duties and Responsibilities of the Personnel Coordinator

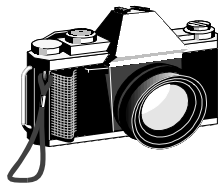
- Provide and assign personnel to properly staff all clerical, professional and lay personnel for all sections.
- Make provisions with the transportation coordinator to provide necessary transportation.
- Provide a telephone list of available personnel and contact as needed.
- Supply a list of personnel needs to veterinary relief director and communications coordinator for assistance in filling needs.
- Contact the Dean, College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Florida to help provide professional experts for disaster relief.
- Provide director with a written report detailing all activities performed including recommendations for improvements.

## Duties and Responsibilities of the Facilities Coordinator

- Coordinate with the director in selecting proper sites for relief facilities for small, large and wild animals.
- Establish adequate facilities to provide emergency medical care, hospitalization and safe storage of medical supplies and equipment.
- Provide power, a communication system, a sanitation system and security of the facility.
- Coordinate with animal services for deceased animal disposal.
- Coordinate with animal welfare groups for strays and foster care.
- Provide director with a written report detailing all activities performed including recommendations for improvements.

## Communication

A central command center should be set up to handle and direct all inquiries. Pass phone numbers to the media, and man phones constantly, even at night. Volunteers who have the ability can serve as excellent personnel for these tasks. Relief rescue units, lost and found locations, and veterinary care centers will be established and can be used to disseminate and collect information.



### Duties and Responsibilities of the Communications Coordinator

- Responsible for all communication facilities between veterinary disaster relief director and related sections.
- Provide telephones, radios, CBs, couriers, machines, computers, beepers, cellular phones, printers and typewriters to all sections as needed.
- Install equipment and provide security.
- Provide equipment operators from personnel coordinator.
- Prepare news releases and distribute where appropriate.
- Provide daily update of key personnel phone list and phone numbers.
- Prepare information sheet for phone operators to direct calls or provide specific answers to questions.
- Provide list of needs from other sections to be given to director.
- Provide photographs and videos of relief efforts for documentation purposes.
- Provide director with a written report detailing all activities performed, including recommendations for improvements.

### Duties and Responsibilities of Animal Care Coordinator

- Provide emergency medical care for all injured animals.
- Coordinate with supply, personnel and facilities coordinators to provide veterinarians and assistants to accomplish the mission.
- Make sure medical supplies are available as needed.
- Provide adequate facilities to accomplish mission.
- Identify and track injured animals and coordinate boarding or fostering with appropriate animal welfare and/or Humane Society groups.
- Provide proper handling of medical waste and controlled drugs as related to veterinary relief efforts.
- Provide food, water and shelter as needed for animal care section relief personnel.

- Provide director with a written report of all activities performed, including recommendations for improvement.

## Animal Identification

If animals have already been permanently identified by a tattoo or other method, animal identification should not be a problem. Many animals, however, will be without identification. It is imperative that some identification system be established as soon as possible to avoid mass confusion when owners return to claim their animals.



Although owners should have been told how to identify their animals before the disaster occurs, many animals will not have any type of identification. As they are moved from location to location, their records must be duplicated with one copy accompanying the animal and the other remaining with the central headquarters.

If no record is left with central headquarters, all contact is lost with that animal as well as records of its treatment and ownership. Dead animals found and disposed of by municipal or other services are usually not identified or otherwise noted before disposal. Animals may die and could be disposed of several days after a disaster without accurate and accessible records.

Identification of dead animals may never be possible, but assistance should be given to municipal or sanitation workers in this process. If animals are disposed of without identification records, many owners will never know the fate of their animals.

## Supplies

Food and water are usually the first supplies to arrive. A central location capable of accommodating large 18-wheel trucks, e.g., fairgrounds, athletic fields, shopping centers, etc., will usually be selected as a reception and distribution point for supplies. Supplies will usually be given freely to those willing to pick them up. Food and water will be transported as soon as possible to those not able to travel to the distribution points.

Veterinary supplies will arrive quickly and should be sent to the same central location as the food and water. This distribution point (and all others) should have directions to veterinary clinics and information about the veterinary supplies. Emergency services are given freely to owners of animals and to unclaimed animals.

For large animals, hay and bags of feed will also arrive at distribution points. Hay and other bagged feed is perishable and may require special facilities for proper storage. Quantities sufficient for all animals may be difficult to stock if such facilities are not available. Ownership of all these supplies must be clearly established early in the disaster plan.

Generators, both large and small, are important equipment to have available. In the disaster area, generators can provide electricity for phones, security lights and other equipment. Each county should have generators available and quickly accessible. A front-end loader is also a valuable piece of equipment to have in the supply warehouse.

### Duties and Responsibilities of the Supply Coordinator



- Search for and secure a centrally located building that can be used as a supply depot for related activities. Building must be secure and have limited access.
- Provide an inventory list of all donated supplies and give receipts to donors. Keep a copy of all receipts.
- Provide a list of supplies on hand and supplies needed to the director and all section coordinators.
- Provide daily distribution of supplies through coordination with transportation section.
- Provide water and food for animals and relief personnel.
- Provide non-medical supplies such as office supplies.

### Records

Two types of records are needed and will accumulate quickly. Lost and found records indicating ownership and the location where the animal was found should accompany every animal. The records will be completed and maintained by volunteers. A Polaroid photograph should be taken when possible and should accompany the paperwork of each animal.

To protect these records from misuse and theft, it is extremely important for the coordinator to monitor and secure them. If records are properly maintained and secured, a permanent mark on the animal that corresponds with an identical mark on the animal's records will provide a safeguard against improper animal identification.

The animal's medical record should be filed with those animals requiring veterinary attention. Some animals accumulate several sheets of medical records if they have sustained severe or multiple injuries.

Because everyone's first priority is to treat injured animals, an inventory of records, supplies, drugs and equipment is seldom accomplished before the treatment process has transpired. Having a veterinary technician volunteer assigned to the central supply area that receives, inventories and disburses these drugs and supplies will prevent daily problems that will occur as the treatment process continues.

“Emergency treatment extends past a routine care schedule. Supplies are needed at various hours...”

Emergency treatment extends past a routine care schedule. Supplies are needed at various hours and cannot be locked up at night as they would under routine conditions. A volunteer to coordinate the central supply area frees veterinarians and technicians to focus on treating injured animals.

## Transportation

Although transportation routes may be limited, volunteer drivers and vehicles must be available to transport animals to holding areas or animal hospitals. With larger animals such as horses, trailers and drivers from nearby horse clubs will probably provide most of the transportation. Humane Society and animal control vehicles will be available from surrounding areas to help transport smaller animals.

An identification system should be established by the Disaster Animal Relief Coordinator (DARC). This system should serve to identify specific relief personnel. Signs such as "Disaster Relief Team" to identify vehicles should also be considered.

The most useful vehicles after a hurricane are those that are dependable and equipped with the following:

- Emergency flashing lights on top of vehicle
- Extra tire repair kits
- Extra fuel capacity
- High clearance
- Four-wheel drive
- Extra capacity to carry people or supplies
- A trailer hitch

## Duties and Responsibilities of the Transportation Coordinator

- Provide transportation vehicles for all activities, including cars, buses, vans, trucks, livestock trailers, helicopters, emergency vehicles, etc.
- Coordinate with personnel section to transport individuals.
- Contact animal services, animal welfare groups, dog clubs, saddle clubs, etc., to secure assistance in providing necessary transportation.
- Coordinate daily to transport supplies to relief facilities where and when needed.
- Provide director with a written report detailing all activities performed, including recommendations for improvements.



The selected sites for the distribution of food, bedding and medications will usually have working hours with security during the night. The hours of operation should be broadcast over various media.

## Security

Theft of animals is best prevented by proper permanent identification. Animals that are loose and picked up after a disaster may either find their way into private foster homes or into makeshift holding areas managed by volunteers.

Both homes and holding areas have one primary function: to care for these animals until the owners come to claim them. For that reason, someone should be present 24 hours a day at each site housing animals.

## Media

A volunteer assigned to work with the media provides relief for the veterinarians and technicians who are busy with medical care. Having someone to conduct tours of makeshift hospitals and assist in the animal identification process saves the practitioners' time.

Media volunteers should be familiar with animals, their treatment and the overall operations of the hurricane relief effort currently offered for animals. The following information should be obtained by a media volunteer and communicated to the media:

- Minor first aid to be administered by animal and pet owners

- Receiving and holding areas
- Treatment centers
- Requests for veterinarians to visit injured animals on site

“All cash, accounts, grants and endowments to provide support must be properly documented and handled by one group, person, or agency.”

## Funding

Two immediate accounting problems will surface. First will be the need to inventory donated supplies that begin to arrive. Boxes full of drugs will come in from nearby practitioners while cases and cartons will arrive from warehouses and drug companies. The supplies received need to be documented and inventoried.

The second problem is that checks written to unknown people or relief efforts will begin to arrive. All cash, accounts, grants and endowments to provide support must be properly documented and handled by one group, person, or agency. There is no way to monitor how this money is used if it is deposited and spent by people outside the relief effort.

Animal control, animal protection and humane groups will expect access to and support from this money. DVMs and veterinary relief efforts will also expect some support from these funds. Many volunteers spend much of their own money to help animals, and in some cases they expect to be reimbursed when the disaster is over.

## Carcass Disposal

Burying animal carcasses or parts of animals is the most common method of disposal. Ensure that the burial site is not near any food or water supplies, and dig a grave deep enough to cover the carcass with at least two feet of dirt. Rocky or shallow soil may force you to wait until burial can be handled by sanitation teams.

Most services may be restored within several days and will be able to handle carcasses that have been kept cool and/or in plastic bags. These animals will probably be taken to a sanitary landfill that has already been identified for such purposes. This is true for large animals such as horses and cattle. Small animals such as dogs and cats are usually disposed of in the same manner.

Farmers have been told to burn animal carcasses in some cases:

- The soil was not deep enough to bury the animals.
- It would be days before sanitation teams could arrive to collect the animals.
- Feral carnivores were eating the carcasses.

“Having and releasing information regarding carcass disposal is important because many animal owners will want advice so they can properly dispose of their animals.”

If enough fuel (wood) is used, the carcasses can be completely burned with little ash remaining. Animal control units, police units and the military will have mechanisms to remove and dispose of carcasses. Having and releasing information regarding carcass disposal is important because many animal owners will want advice so they can properly dispose of their animals.

## Volunteers

Recruiting and managing volunteers is a tremendous effort which involves recruiting volunteers to clean stalls and cages and to transport wounded animals to clinical practitioners and veterinary technicians. The first organizations to recruit and place volunteers in a disaster area are usually the organizations already dealing with volunteers. These organizations may have the first available people and supplies on the scene.

Animal control units, animal protection units and other animal welfare organizations will quickly follow with more supplies and willing volunteers. Because veterinary practices are small organizations, they will quickly become overrun and depleted of materials and supplies.

As the various veterinary organizations are contacted, a central area for treating large numbers of animals and receiving large volumes of supplies will be sought and identified. Once this central organization site is selected, then all volunteers have a common headquarters for communication, directions and daily orders.

Your state Veterinary Medical Association should have a list of veterinary technicians to contact in case of emergency which can send you emergency relief teams.

Practitioners can make their greatest impact by releasing their trained technicians for extended periods to assist in the care of unclaimed and injured animals. Secure housing, food and supplies for the technicians in advance. If possible, provide them with portable car phones to assure communication.



# Final Comments

“Someone within each veterinary school should be assigned liaison duties with the relief effort. Veterinary help for large, small and exotic animals may be needed. Veterinary schools need to recognize that in many cases, specialists are usually not needed, but technicians and senior students are.”

When disasters strike, the horse population is often at greater risk for traumatic injury than the human population because of the conditions under which horses are normally maintained. Horses may escape from their normal confinements or their stabling may be destroyed, resulting in traumatic injury.

When these emergency situations arise, veterinarians familiar with equine practice may be requested to assist with their capture and emergency treatment. Teams of trained personnel can provide the most assistance, especially if they can stay for 7-10 days or more. They can be assigned to provide whatever relief is needed most.

Someone within each veterinary school should be assigned liaison duties with the relief effort. Veterinary help for large, small and exotic animals may be needed. Veterinary schools need to recognize that in many cases specialists are usually not needed, but technicians and senior students are. Unless the calls are for more veterinarians, the major manpower need is for technicians.

## Helpful Telephone Numbers

Develop a list of helpful phone numbers. Contact your state emergency management department and your state cooperative extension service.

- State Disaster Hotline
- State Division of Emergency Management
- College of Veterinary Medicine at your land-grant university
- State Veterinary Medical Association
- State Department for Animal Industry and Veterinary Services