

GUIDELINES FOR “CUSTOMIZING” THE SAMPLE ANIMAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN

Section I: Purpose

This Animal Emergency Plan offers a suggested approach to dealing with situations that may arise when dealing with animals that are affected by disasters in your jurisdiction. The sample plan authors felt that a well thought out, written animal emergency operations plan would help local emergency managers fulfill the requirements of the MNWALK checklist, Item 44, which tasks their agencies with identifying individual(s) or organization(s) (by title) responsible for coordinating pet evacuation and sheltering. Having an Animal Emergency Operations Plan also helps the emergency manager to partially fulfill requirements listed in Item 69 of the MNWALK checklist, which tasks planning agencies to “Describe your process for managing volunteer resources and donations.”

The Plan developers realize that each jurisdiction is unique, and what may work in one situation may not in another. Plan developers have volunteered to assist interested emergency managers on an individual basis to help them tailor the sample plan to their specific needs.

The one thing that all jurisdictions have in common is that proactive planning for animals in disaster has a direct bearing on human public health and safety.

Section II: Animal Population Estimates – From the American Veterinary Medical Association’s, *US Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook*, here are some formulas to use to estimate the number of animals that reside in your jurisdiction:

- A. **Companion Animals (Pets)** – The number of pet-owning households = $.589 \times$ total number of households.

Dogs = $.534 \times$ total number of households. Rural areas generally have more dogs than this figure reports, while urban areas have less.

Cats = $.598 \times$ total number of households. Rural areas may contain more cats, but urban areas do not usually contain less than the average amount, given the increasing popularity of cats as pets for apartment-dwellers.

Birds = .126 X total number of households.

Horses = .040 X total number of households. This figure reflects all horses, including those raised as pets and working animals.

Rabbits & Ferrets = .023 X total number of households.

Rodents = .023 X total number of households.

Reptiles = .015 X total number of households.

Fish = .063 X total number of households.

NOTES: Figures are based on numbers of Households. If you are using population figures instead, divide the population figure by 2.65 to get households. Also address somewhere in your plan any large scale dog & cat breeders that supply animals to pet stores. Possible sources for information on these breeders include the MN and US Departments of Agriculture.

- B. **Livestock/Large Animals** – A great place to get figures for livestock is from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Agriculture Statistical Service (NASS). The e-mail address for the NASS Agriculture Census Database for all Minnesota counties can be found at the rear of these plan guidelines. The agriculture census is done every 5 years; the next one will be conducted in 2002. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture, MN Board of Animal Health and the Farm Service Agency may also be good sources of livestock animal population numbers.
- C. **Exotic Animals** – Exotic animals are those not normally kept as pets, or that are not usually found in your area. Some examples include big cats, constrictors, venomous and other non-indigenous snakes, primates, turtles & other reptiles, raptors, etc. Some species may fit in more than one category, such as llamas, ostriches and emus (which could be considered as either livestock or as exotics, depending on the situation).

Zoos accredited by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) typically have emergency plans for their facilities. Contact with local zoo officials should be made and maintained, however, to make sure that plans have been developed, to discuss coordination and communication issues and to recruit specialists to join you in your efforts with the community animal emergency plan. Zoo officials have expertise in wildlife and exotic animal care, medicine

and rescue/recovery and can be extremely valuable assets to the animal emergency planning effort.

Don't forget to address deer parks, petting zoos and animal acts in your plans. Herpetology and bird clubs, Audobon Society members, wildlife "rehabbers" and other groups may be able to provide a great deal of information to help you gauge the numbers and species of exotic animals in your service area.

Emphasize in plans that some exotic animals may be dangerous or present special problems. Contact experts with experience in handling exotic species for guidance on issues regarding the handling of these animals in disaster situations. If a decision is made not to attempt recapture of dangerous exotic animals during a disaster, steps should be taken to carefully define which species this decision applies to. The public should be informed through public information channels that it may be necessary for officials to humanely euthanize such animals that are found at large in disaster situations.

- D. **Wildlife** – Check with your local MN DNR Area Wildlife Manager for wildlife figures. Especially address any wildlife in your area that may pose a danger in disaster situations (Timber or Massasauga Rattlesnakes in SE Minnesota, for example).

Section III: Responsibilities:

One of the primary benefits of writing this plan is that it will give you an opportunity to familiarize yourself with the wide range of groups and organizations involved with animals in your county. It would also be an opportunity to suggest that these organizations consider what they would do or how they could assist in emergencies that affect animals. Contact information for several of these organizations can be found in the resource guide distributed with this sample plan.

Item A2. **Appointing a County Animal Coordinator** - Here are some possible sources for County Animal Coordinator candidates:

- A local or county animal control officer
- A local veterinarian
- A local feed/pet store proprietor
- A local humane society representative
- A commercial kennel operator
- A county extension agent
- A local farmer or NFO/Farm Bureau/Farmer's Union member
- Someone from the local Farm Service Agency (FSA)

- Item B6. **Development of standardized reporting forms** - Sample reporting forms can be found in the resource guide.
- Item C. **Lead Agency (*East Overshoe Humane Society*)** - There are numerous organizations/agencies that you might consider for the role of lead agency for companion animal issues in your jurisdiction, depending upon your unique situation. **In our sample we used a fictitious *East Overshoe Humane Society*** and your local humane society might be a good choice. If you have one, an animal control agency in your county, as a government agency, might also be a strong candidate. Other candidates might include veterinarians and rescue groups. If you do not have a humane society or an animal control office in your county, an alternative may be to work with a humane society or animal control office from a neighboring jurisdiction to oversee the animal effort on your behalf. There are many local and national animal organizations that can assist you with your search. Whoever is selected should know the community and the law and have field staff with extensive animal handling expertise.
- Item C4. **Shelter facilities** - Include a list of suitable facilities that have been surveyed for use as shelters in the resource section of your plan, if one exists.
- Item C8. **Holding periods for animals being sheltered.** Factors that should be taken into consideration when determining holding periods for animals include:
- State and municipal laws.
 - The type of disaster and the number of people (and animals) displaced.
 - The duration of the disaster (how long before families can return to their homes).
 - The number of temporary animal shelters that were set up.
- Every effort should be made to reunite companion animals with their owners. Overly long holding periods can be detrimental to the health and temperament of held animals and may cause them to become unadoptable if their owners do not claim them.
- Item F. **Veterinary community** - Veterinarians may want to reserve the option to charge for services rendered if they are to participate in a disaster response. Explicit arrangements in advance are recommended. Some veterinarians have special disaster training and may even be Veterinary Medical Assistance Team (VMAT)

members. These disaster responders are affiliated with the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA). These specialists are extremely valuable to your community and should be encouraged to play a key role in your planning process.

Item I. **Dead Animal Disposal** – Procedures for disposing of the carcasses of animals that have died during a disaster can be complicated. Health, pollution control, terrain, weather and water table concerns all have an impact on how carcasses are disposed of in disaster situations. Try to address this as much as possible in advance of disaster situations. Be sure to include the following organizations in the decision making process for removal of animal carcasses:

- Local & State Health Departments (MN Department of Health)
- MN Department of Natural Resources
- MN Board of Animal Health
- MN Pollution Control Agency
- MN Department of Agriculture
- US Fish & Wildlife Service

Section V: Plan Activation Procedures - Address the needs for Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's), call-down lists and resource guides here.

OTHER HELPFUL INFORMATION

Internet Resources – Visit the following internet web sites for more helpful information about developing your animal emergency operations plan:

Minnesota Animal Control Association (MACA) – <http://www.minnesotaanimalcontrol.org>

Minnesota State Government (North Star) – www.state.mn.us

MN Division of Emergency Management (DEM) - www.dem.state.mn.us

MN Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

Home Page – www.dnr.state.mn.us

Wildlife Area Offices – www.dnr.state.mn.us/fish_and_wildlife/wildoff.html

MN Department of Agriculture – www.mda.state.mn.us

MN Board of Animal Health (MN BOAH) – www.bah.state.mn.us

MN Department of Health (MDH) – www.health.state.mn.us

MN Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) – www.pca.state.mn.us

USDA, National Agriculture Statistical Service (NASS)

www.nass.usda.gov/census/census97/highlights/mn/mn.htm

USDA, Farm Service Agency (USDA FSA) – www.fsa.usda.gov

American Humane Association (AHA) – www.americanhumane.org

Animal Humane Society (Golden Valley, MN) –
www.animalhumanesociety.org

Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) – www.hsus.org

MN Horse Council – www.MNHorseCouncil.org

American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)

Home Page – www.avma.org

Formulas For Estimating Pet Numbers – www.avma.org/cim/estimate.htm

League of Minnesota Cities – www.lmnc.org

University of Minnesota Extension Service – www.extension.umn.edu
(Contact information for county extension agents can be accessed from this web page)

PetsWelcome – A newly developing database of hotels, motels that allow animals. Their address is : www.PetsWelcome.com

Thank You!

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The Animal Humane Society, Golden Valley
The American Humane Association (AHA)
The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)
The American Red Cross

Association of Minnesota Emergency Managers (AMEM)
Metropolitan Emergency Managers Association (MEMA)

Minnesota Division of Emergency Management (DEM) and Department of Agriculture (MDA), the Board of Animal Health and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)