

EMERGENCY ANIMAL PREPAREDNESS: ANIMAL DISASTER SHELTERING EXERCISE (STATEWIDE)

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PROJECT INTRODUCTION

- The Animal Disaster Response and Emergency Preparedness Internship is an internship for veterinary students to learn about the veterinarian’s role in disaster response, and how veterinary knowledge can improve response protocols.
- Disaster Preparedness is a continuous cycle of planning, organizing, training, equipping, exercising, evaluating, and taking corrective action in an effort to ensure effective coordination during incident response.
- In 2006, the Pets Act was passed by Congress requiring counties and states to have plans to provide rescue, sheltering, and care for household pets and service animals during disasters in order to receive FEMA money.
- Many Colorado communities have established plans but have not practiced them to determine their effectiveness. Response plans that are not practiced are fraught with unintended consequences that may threaten human safety.

INTERNSHIP GOALS

Develop understanding of the Incident Command System and emergency response procedures.

Assist the Colorado State Veterinarian’s Office with disease outbreak response and investigation during the summer of 2021

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO YOUR EDUCATION

I am a fond supporter of disaster preparedness and the Incident Command System. Prior to my coursework as a DVM student, I was a marine stranding operator. I worked on rescue and recovery of injured and deceased marine mammals ranging from sea lions to sea otters. During my time with them, I worked an active wildlife disease outbreak. This taught me the importance of a strong command system with team leads and communicating branches.

When I came to Fort Collins, I joined the Larimer County Dive Rescue team. My education in disaster preparedness for animals is very beneficial for our team's flood and water incident management. We are believers in preparedness. Two weeks of prep is required for every incident.

Additionally, I plan to be a community resiliency leader as a veterinarian. Helping communities be better prepared is a fundamental goal of a veterinarian, as we can reach both individuals and the larger community.

ANIMAL DISASTER SHELTERING EXERCISE

GOAL: For local personnel to practice the county large animal and small animal emergency sheltering plan.

For my internship, I worked on developing a community exercise to be utilized by Emergency Support Function teams involved with animal disaster preparedness and incident command for smaller incidents. The outline for the exercise is below.

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Identify the county risks and available resources	Select Shelter Location(s)	Setting up a Shelter	The Exercise	Debrief and Disassembly
Goals: Identify most common risks. Estimate animal population. Identify local resources and volunteers for CART (county animal response team)	Goals: Determine the location of the disaster shelter. Configure the floor plan for the shelter within the location. Discuss goals of the design.	Goals: Practice setting up the temporary shelter. Evaluate the work flow of this floor plan.	Goals: Identify volunteers and credential them to participate in the sheltering. (CART). Practice the shelter protocols. Test a scenario.	Goals: Reflect on the exercise and identify specific steps to improve future exercises. Disassemble the shelter, clean and store. Clearly label equipment.

Figure 1. 2013 Northern Colorado Floods: National Guard Blackhawk rescue of pets and their people stranded by floods



WHAT YOU LEARNED

I learned a great deal about what is involved in emergency responses and animal sheltering. I personally have worked in the field doing human rescues and wildlife. However, I found that my prior knowledge was only good for the basics. Animal emergencies are a broad and everlasting concern. They range from biosecurity issues such as in the case of foreign animal diseases to that of wildfire evacuations. Even with this range, I learned that the basics of a strong resiliency is teamwork and practice. Thus, I focused on creating animal disaster exercises for ESF 11 teams throughout the state.

Figure 2. Setting up horse stalls at The Ranch in Larimer County for evacuees of the Cameron Peak Fire, summer 2020.



NEXT STEPS

Distribute the sheltering exercise and information to county emergency managers and associated partners throughout the state to encourage local animal disaster teams to practice and exercise their plans.

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