

ULSTER COUNTY
COUNTY ANIMAL RESPONSE
TEAM (CART) ANNEX



An Annex to the
Ulster County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan

November 2007

County Animal Response Team Annex
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Introduction

Ulster County is home to over 180,000 residents. These residents have more than 44,750 dogs¹, 48,200 cats², and assorted other pets according to the latest SPCA census and national averages. Additionally, Ulster County has a rich history in farming and agriculture. It is estimated that the county's farmers have _____ cows, pigs and other livestock. Unfortunately, the lives of both owners and their animals are subject to disasters. Fires and floods are two of the top hazards facing Ulster County. Each has had a serious impact on domestic animals and livestock. Neighbors and strangers have both stepped up to help rescue and provide shelter to endangered and displaced animals.

Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to provide guidance for the safe and humane evacuation and sheltering of domestic and farm animals during times of natural or man-made disasters. Ensuring the well-being of pets and livestock will not only be in the best interest of the animals, but will serve to protect their owners and rescuers (national statistics indicate 20% of pet owners will not evacuate if sufficient provisions are not made for their animals, thus placing rescuers in greater danger). Providing humane care and sanitary shelters for displaced animals is also in the best interest of public health and the environment.

To achieve these goals, Ulster County has developed a County Animal Response Team (CART). The CART is not designed to replace established animal protection and support organizations. Local animal control officials and the SPCA will continue to have responsibility for domestic animals; Cornell Cooperative Extension and various grange organizations will continue to assist farmers; and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation will continue to have responsibility for issues involving wild animals. It is during times of emergency that the CART *may* be mobilized.

Roles and Responsibilities

Animal owners

The primary responsibility for caring for their animals, whether pets or livestock, rests with the animal's owner. Animal owners should develop their own plans for transporting and sheltering their animals should they have to evacuate their home or farm. It must be understood that Red Cross shelters will only accept service animals (seeing eye dogs, etc) at their general population shelters.

A pet owner's plans for sheltering their animals should include

1. Making prearrangements with family or friends in unaffected areas for the temporary sheltering of their pets should they need to evacuate their home.

¹ 67,500 households in Ulster County x the national average of dog-owning households of 39% x the national average of dogs owned per dog-owning household 1.7

² 67,500 households in Ulster County x the national average of cat-owning households of 34% x the national average of cats owned per cat-owning household 2.1

2. Establishing a pet disaster ‘go kit’ readily available for immediate evacuations. The go kit should include a carrying case or leash, water and food dishes, and pet medications.
3. Maintaining vaccination records, a list of current medications and contact information for the animal’s veterinarian.
4. Ensure that each pet has a collar with adequate vaccination and contact information.
5. Maintaining current photos of their pet.

Animal Caregivers

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Cornell Cooperative Extension has an extensive network throughout the farming community. They may assist in identifying and procuring additional resources, facilities and volunteers. They may also assist in the coordination of transporting and housing livestock and farm animals in emergency sheltering situations.

Private Farms, Kennels and Stables

Most farmers have a culture of helping their neighbors and peers. As such, many farmers may be able to provide shelter and supplies to care for displaced livestock. Individuals involved with kennel operations may also have excess capacity and may be willing to assist with the temporary sheltering of domesticated animals.

SPCA

More than any other organization, the SPCA has the unparalleled experience of caring for animals in both exigent and routine situations. They can provide volunteers, resources and facilities to assist in the evacuation and sheltering of domestic and farm animals during times of disaster. They are also a valuable resource that can assist with technical support and the coordination of external agencies used to manage emergency shelter operations.

Veterinarians and Other Animal Care Professionals

Veterinarians, vet-techs and other animal care professionals provide medical treatment to all types of animals on a daily basis. Many also operate kennels for recuperating animals and may have available space. They can provide personnel, equipment, medicine, and shelter facilities to care for and shelter pets from evacuated citizens and in cases where established animal shelters are filled or destroyed.

Local Municipal Agencies

Highway Departments

Local, county and state highway departments are responsible on a daily basis for disposing of dead animals that have been struck by automobiles. Various means of disposal are used including contracting, burying, landfilling and composting. In times of disaster there may be large numbers of dead animals to dispose of and the experience, heavy machinery and contacts of highway personnel will be invaluable. County and state health departments as well as the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets will provide guidance in the preferred means of disposing of animal carcasses that is in the best interest of public health.

Local animal control officers

In accordance with established local procedures, domestic pets that are loose or in need of assistance will become the responsibility of local animal control officers. During times of emergency, the number of pets separated from their owners will increase. Local animal control officers are equipped to handle strays and may operate kennels or holding facilities with excess capacity.

New York State Agencies

NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets

NYS Ag & Markets shall assist in coordinating the deployment of trained personnel in the investigation of any disease outbreak in domestic animals; assist in increased surveillance or surrounding areas in order to detect or limit the spread of disease; apply quarantine to animals or animal products; and assist in coordinating the cleanup and disposal for agricultural facilities.

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

To the greatest extent possible, wild animals will be left to their own survival instincts. Wild animals that become a danger to the public will be the responsibility of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The NYS DEC shall provide and coordinate the personnel and equipment required to protect these non-domestic (wild) animals as well as care for sick and/or injured wild animals. If possible, wild animals will be returned to their natural habitat. The DEC may also assist with coordinating the disposal of deceased animals that pose a threat to public health

NYS Department of Health

The NYS Department of Health shall assist the Ulster County Health Department in coordinating the deployment of personnel trained in the investigation and control of zoonotic diseases.

NYS Emergency Management Office

The NYS Emergency Management Office is responsible for the coordination and activation of the State Animal Response Team (SART), and the filling of all emergency requests that cannot be met at the local level and which are funneled through the state emergency coordination center.

Ulster County Agencies

CART

The Ulster County Animal Response Team is an organized group of volunteers who agree to assist with the evacuation, transport and sheltering of animals during times of disaster.

UC Office of Emergency Management

The Ulster County Emergency Management Office will be responsible for maintaining this plan; for contacting the CART branch director when the services of the team are required; and for making the CART branch director aware of upcoming training opportunities. During times of emergency, either the Operations Section Chief or the Emergency Management director will work with the CART branch director to prioritize areas in need of evacuation, and in supporting requests for additional personnel.

UC Health Department

The Ulster County Health Department will be responsible for ensuring that overall public health is not compromised by domestic, farm or wild animals during a disaster. The UC Health Department will provide services to control injuries, bites and diseases caused or spread by animals; coordinate with the NYS Department of Health to minimize zoonotic disease outbreaks; and make recommendations for the removal, storage and disposal of dead animals.

CART

Membership

All CART team members must complete a CART application, be approved for membership, obtain a county ID and attend basic CART orientation and training. This training will include an overview of disaster preparedness and the incident command system, disaster psychology, this plan, and specific policies and procedures as may be established for use during times of activation.

Organization

There will be a CART team branch director and as many deputy directors as may be required as well as animal evacuation division supervisor and shelter division supervisor. Positions such as the evacuation division supervisor and the shelter

division supervisor shall be assigned on an as-needed basis. Members will report to the supervisor as assigned.

Concept of Operation

Readiness

Identification of resources / sheltering facilities

A primary objective of the CART is to educate the public on how to plan for and care for their animals during a disaster. Having a well prepared public will minimize their exposure to dangerous situations, and limit the need to evacuate and shelter animals during a disaster.

Another critical task is to maintain up-to-date resource lists. A current roster of trained volunteers complete with contact information is imperative, as is the need to maintain current lists of transportation providers, pet supply locations, veterinarians, and shelter facilities for boarding animals.

Training

Periodic training will take place for all CART team members. Formal training program may be offered locally, or they may require some travel. Local training of the CART will focus on policies and procedures and the methods used to evacuate, transport and shelter animals in Ulster County; the incident command system(ICS) and Nation Incident Management System (NIMS) for interaction with other agencies in a disaster setting; and mobilization exercises.

Response

Notification / Activation

When it is determined that the CART needs to be activated, the Emergency Management Director, or the Operations Section Chief within the ICS framework, will notify the CART team branch director who in turn will activate the team as appropriate. There will be situations where the entire team is needed, other incidents of a lesser magnitude may only require a partial team activation. If a member of the CART feels there is a need to activate, this must be passed up through the chain of command – first to the CART team branch director and then the Emergency Management Director. Self deployment or “free lancing” is not authorized because of the dangers involved, lack of insurance, and the need to maintain appropriate command and control of all emergency scenes.

CART branch director

The responsibilities of the CART branch director include, but are not limited to:

- Ensure the guidance of this document is carried out.
- Develop any necessary job descriptions and duties for CART volunteers
- Communicate with the Emergency Manager or Operations Section Chief
- Establish staging areas, evacuation procedures and shelter locations, as needed
- Determine staffing needs and activate volunteers accordingly, including requesting CART resources from other jurisdictions (through the EOC)
- Coordinate briefings with the Evacuation Supervisor and Shelter Supervisor at least once each operational period (every 12 hours)
- Serve as the single point of contact for all animal related issues during time of disaster
- Ensure that accurate and timely public information is provided to the PIO

Animal Evacuation Division Supervisor

The responsibilities of the Animal Evacuation Division Supervisor include, but are not limited to:

- Ensure that all evacuations and transports are conducted in a safe and risk free manner
- Ensure personnel accountability for all CART members assigned to them
- Ensure the evacuation of animals is coordinated at the local level with the police / fire personnel conducting evacuations of residents
- Conduct briefings with CART volunteers assigned to evacuation / transport as needed. This should include making certain all volunteers know safety precautions, evacuation procedures, and transportation routes.
- Coordinate with the Shelter Division Supervisor regarding the number and type of animals being evacuated that require sheltering
- Participate in briefings with the CART branch director at least once each operational period

Animal Shelter Division Supervisor

The responsibilities of the Animal Shelter Division Supervisor include, but are not limited to:

- Ensure that all available safety measures are initiated to keep CART volunteers and animals safe from the environment, disease and other animals
- Ensure an adequate number of CART team members are available to work at the shelter
- Ensure an adequate facility is prepared for the anticipated number and types of animals being evacuated
- Ensure that an identification system is established for tracking each animal entering the shelter
- Evaluate the needs (food, water, medical care) of each animal entering the shelter
- Ensure the cleanliness of the shelter facility
- When reuniting animals and owners, require identification of the owner to match him/her with the animal
- Conduct briefings with CART volunteers assigned to the shelter as needed
- Coordinate with the Evacuation Division Supervisor concerning the number and types of animals being transported to the shelter
- Participate in briefings with the CART branch director at least once each operational period

Stray/lost domestic pets

All stray/lost domestic pets recovered by local animal control officials, the SPCA or the CART will be sheltered at local municipal kennels or the Ulster County SPCA facility. Private boarding kennels, veterinarian clinics, and temporary shelters established by the CART will serve as overflow shelters. All reasonable efforts will be made to identify the owners of stray/lost animals. If owners cannot be found, an attempt to place the animal up for adoption will be made in accordance with the agency's established procedures. Animals for which no owner can be located, and which cannot be placed through adoption will be disposed of in accordance with established animal control procedures.

Fees for Services

This plan does not recommend, require or endorse a fee for the provision of any service connected with the evacuation, transport, treatment or sheltering of animals. All parties assisting in the evacuation, transport and sheltering of domestic and farm animals are doing so with the understanding that they are volunteering time and resources to protect the safety of the animals. If donations are made in support of these efforts, actual expenses may be

reimbursed through established animal care organizations, or through the finance section within the ICS structure.

Donation Management

During the course of disaster operations, contributions of services or monetary donations specifically for the care of animals may be made by the general public. Donations that are not made to a specific organization (eg the SPCA) will be managed by the Finance/Administration Section of the incident command organization. Donations made to an organization will be managed by that body. At no time will anyone affiliated with the Ulster County Animal Response Team solicit donations on behalf of Ulster County.

Media contact

During emergency incidents, requests for media interviews, photography of shelters, etc will be referred to the incident's designated Public Information Officer (PIO). The PIO will issue all statements to the press, and be available to accompany members of the media to shelter locations. During non-emergency periods, all public relations efforts should be handled through the CART branch director.

Recovery

Planning for recovery actually begins with the record keeping performed during intake. The careful documentation of pet owner's information (permanent as well as relocation information) will ease the process of reuniting owner and pet. Likewise, the careful tagging of all sheltered animals is critical to positive identification for reunion with the pet's owner.

Once conditions in an affected area are considered safe, notice will be given through the public information officer. The message may be given to residents that it is safe to return to retrieve belongings and then leave the area; or the all clear signal may be given allowing for a full re-entry and re-occupation of evacuated areas. As soon as practical, the pet owner should make contact with the SPCA, local animal control officer or CART organization to begin the process of reuniting pet and owner. The agency sheltering the animal may have to extend care giving efforts if the owner's primary housing is deemed uninhabitable. In this case, long term arrangements for the care of the animal must be made to ease the burden on the local agency.

Every effort will be made to reunite owners with their pets. However, if it becomes apparent a pet has been abandoned, or the owner is simply no longer able to care for the animal due to circumstances brought on by the

disaster, the pets will be put up for adoption or disposed of in accordance with established procedures.

Plan updates

This plan will be reviewed and updated as required by the Ulster County Emergency Management Office in consultation with the partners identified in this plan.

Appendix A

Public Service Announcements

Domestic Pets

If you evacuate your home, **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR PET BEHIND**. Pets most likely cannot survive on their own and you may not be able to find them when you return.

For public health reasons, most emergency shelters cannot accept pets. Find out which motels and hotels in your area allow pets. Include your local animal shelter's number in your list of emergency numbers – they will be able to provide information concerning pets during a disaster.

Make sure identification tags are up to date and securely fastened to your pet's collar. If possible, attach the address and/or phone number of your evacuation site.

Make sure you have a current photo of your pet for identification purposes.

Make sure you have a secure pet carrier, leash or harness for your pet so that if the animal panics, it cannot escape.

Take pet food, bottled water, medications, veterinary records, cat litter pan, can opener, food dishes, first aid kit and other supplies with you in case they are not available later.

Make sure you have a copy of your pet's medical records. If you are unable to return to your home right away, you may need to board your pet. Most boarding kennels, veterinarians, and animal shelters require that your pet's vaccinations be current.

If it is impossible to take your pet with you to a temporary shelter, contact friends, family, veterinarians, or boarding kennels to arrange for care. Make sure medical and feeding information, food, medicine and other supplies accompany your pet to its foster home.

Equines, cattle and small livestock

Evacuate equines, cattle and small livestock whenever possible. The evacuation sites should have, or be able to readily obtain food, water, veterinary care, handling equipment and facilities. If evacuation is not possible, a decision must be made whether to move large animals to available shelter or turn them outside. This decision should be determined based on the type of disaster and the soundness and location of the shelter. All animals should have some form of identification that will help facilitate their return.

Wildlife

Never attempt to capture a wild animal unless you have the training, protective clothing, restraint equipment and caging necessary to perform the job. Often, during natural disasters, mosquitoes and dead animal carcasses may present disease problems. Outbreaks of anthrax, encephalitis and other diseases may occur.

Appendix B

Equipment Requirements for Evacuation, Transportation & Sheltering

Equipment requirements for evacuation / transportation

- Identification system / tags
- Heavy gloves
- Collars, leashes
- Cages
- Vehicles for transportation

Sheltering

- Identification system / tags
- Heavy gloves
- Collars, leashes
- Cages / temporary fencing
- Water
- Food (appropriate for each species)
- Bowls /dishes
- Garbage bags, pooper scoopers
- Disinfectant / cleaning supplies
- Veterinary medical care area

Appendix C

Resources

Requests for resources needed during the course of disaster management shall be made through the Emergency Operations Center. Should demand exceed local resources, assistance may be requested through the New York State Emergency Coordination Center.

Personnel

- Animal control agencies / municipal animal control officers
- CART contact list
- SPCA
- Veterinarians

Transportation providers

Equipment suppliers

- Cages, fencing
- Collars, leashes
- Feed
- Medical supplies / medications
- Other supplies

Sheltering facilities / kennels

Name, address & contact information; species accepted; number of cages; requirements for entry; will accept sick animals (yes or no)

Appendix D
Hotels / Motels that accept pets