

AAEP



EMERGENCY & DISASTER PREPAREDNESS GUIDELINES

American Association of Equine Practitioners
RESOURCE LIBRARY

EMERGENCY & DISASTER PREPAREDNESS GUIDELINES

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Published By
The American Association
of Equine Practitioners
4075 Iron Works Parkway
Lexington, Ky 40511

Photos courtesy of Dr. Venaye Reece and Dr. John Madigan



FEBRUARY 2003

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There are many housing options for horses in the event of an emergency. Here a horse stands safely enclosed in temporary stabling after a tornado struck the area.

THE ROLE OF THE EQUINE PRACTITIONER IN DISASTERS

In the course of natural disasters, foreign animal disease outbreaks, or other catastrophic events, the health and well-being of horses can be adversely affected. The equine practitioner is uniquely qualified to understand and treat the injuries and stresses of horses in a disaster as well as understand the logistical factors associated with a rapid or planned evacuation of horses.

As veterinarians, triaging is part of everyday life, and the community will look to the practitioner as an important resource in the post-disaster period. Planning for a disaster is often an overlooked aspect of a busy equine practice, but is an important benefit to the horse owners within a community as well as the veterinary practice itself. To be of help to the community, the veterinarian and his or her place of business must have a well-thought out and practiced disaster plan—you must save yourself before you can hope to save others!

The purpose of this AAEP resource guide is to identify the important role the equine practitioner can have in disaster preparation, emergency response and rescue, and post-disaster veterinary care of the horse, as well as to describe the necessary precautions that every equine practitioner should take in developing a sound disaster preparedness plan.



A demonstration of how an Anderson sling works. Planning and practicing are crucial in order to assist the community in a disaster situation.

EDUCATE YOUR CLIENTS

The most important role of the equine practitioner regarding disasters is educating clients about disaster preparedness. Effective disaster preparedness saves more lives than any type of disaster response.¹ The equine practitioner can serve as a community resource by educating the local horse owners through seminars and talks at Pony Club, 4-H, and other local community equine forums.

Questions should be posed as to what each horse owner would do if they were without power for three days, had to evacuate all the horses on the premise, or had a loss of structures due to wind damage. Do they have resources available to evacuate all animals quickly? Can they provide feed and water for all animals for three days with no power or outside help? Do they have adequate materials to securely identify all evacuated animals and abandoned animals so that ownership cannot be challenged?

Horse owners should also be educated about the ways horses respond to differing types of disasters and the most common injuries sustained in each type. Distribution of pamphlets detailing the essentials of disaster planning should be part of equine practice, similar to distributing information on vaccinations or parasite control. Client education pamphlets on Emergency Preparedness can be obtained by contacting the AAEP at (859) 233-0147.



Horse owners should be prepared for their horses' responses to different emergency situations. Here a horse is led calmly through floodwaters.

ESTABLISHING A LOCAL RESPONSE SYSTEM

Practitioners may play a critical role in helping develop local disaster response plans and setting up volunteer disaster response teams. Key components of a county disaster plan include identifying possible animal housing, feed and water supplies, sources of tack and animal housekeeping materials, and means of mass transport during evacuations.

Housing options for horses may include fairgrounds, stables or racetracks, sales yards, rodeo arenas, local educational institutions, producers, ranches, and private property. Food resources may include feed stores, hay brokers, local boarding and/or breeding facilities, ranchers, and private individuals.

Important supplies for use in disasters include halters, lead ropes, blankets, bedding, wheelbarrows, rakes, pitchforks, buckets, hoses, fly spray, chlorine bleach, disinfectant, and lime. Researching possible donors and stockpiles of these materials in advance allows rapid distribution during times of need. Supplies the practitioner may be best equipped to provide include common medications, IV fluids, leg wraps and bandages, vaccines, and use of ambulatory clinics.

TRANSPORTATION

Common resources for animal transportation and evacuation during an emergency include local horsemen's associations/riding clubs, private horse trailers, horse transportation companies, local cattlemen's associations, ranchers, and livestock transportation companies. Often residents are only allowed to leave the disaster site once or twice before they are barred from re-entry. Therefore, one key to successful evacuation of animals is educating clients about the importance of maintaining adequate transportation to evacuate all their animals within one to two trips. Since many of these resources may also be utilized in disasters for human care and response, it is important to work with your local emergency services coordinator to incorporate the animal plan into the county's disaster plan for humans. Other agencies to involve include local animal control officers and local humane associations.

INTERACTION WITH LOCAL AND STATE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

In a large declared disaster, the equine practitioner must be able to effectively interface with those controlling movement of people and animals in an area impacted by disaster. Unless you are a known resource to local disaster response officials (and credentialed accordingly), you are likely to be turned away at a roadblock before ever getting a chance to help.

Additionally, knowledge of key resources for feed and supplies and evacuation sites is required for the care of displaced horses. This requires that, prior to a disaster, preparation for the utilization of the equine practitioner's skills and resources be made.

A county animal coordinator should be identified to serve in the Office of Emergency Services (OES), and this person should act as a point of contact for animal issues. The equine practitioner should have knowledge and be part of the Disaster Service Worker plan for his or her area. This may require interfacing with Animal Control and the County Office of Emergency Services coordinator. If the practitioner wishes to participate in field response, he or she will be required to take a course on the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS), the Incident Command System (ICS), and become certified as a Disaster Service Worker. By learning the components of the county disaster plan and SEMS and becoming a registered Disaster Service Worker with an identification card, the equine practitioner can be extremely effective in a disaster.



Those involved in disaster services must be prepared for worst case scenarios. Officials carry out an accident drill on an overturned trailer.

STATE VETERINARY ORGANIZATIONS

Each state veterinary organization should have an effective disaster plan for animals that includes horses. This plan should interface with existing state plans and have an assigned large animal coordinator in the state OES for animal issues. Equine practitioners should meet at least yearly to review the availability of resources and plans for the following year. Disasters come in all shapes and sizes, and training (HAZMAT and FAD) and equipment caches need to reflect the varying roles a veterinarian is likely to play.

PREPARING FOR RESCUE

Rescue of horses trapped or stranded in some disaster situations may require the unique services offered by a veterinarian for physical examination and assessment, chemical restraint, emergency treatment of wounds or other conditions, or assessment of permanent irreparable injury that necessitates humane euthanasia to prevent suffering.^{2,3} This requires that a veterinarian be able to enter the disaster area once it is stabilized—an area often closed to all but emergency personnel. In order to gain entry an official emergency management ID card must be obtained. Animal Control or another county agency must be contacted for credentialing and to coordinate the immediate rescue and care of animals left behind in an evacuation.

Additionally, the veterinarian should be aware of potential hazards following a flood, fire or hurricane (see Sebastian Heath *Management of Animals in Disasters*); have safety training; and obtain the appropriate equipment in order to allow safe, effective rescue of stranded horses.⁴ Additionally, specialized individual animal rescue of horses, including helicopter airlift, may be utilized in some situations when no other means is available.⁵



A horse being lifted by crane out of deep mud. The aftermath of a disaster may require extreme measures to rescue animals.

It is important to remember that on-site provision of feed, water, and local treatment of the horse until transportation or other resources become available is often an effective method that can mitigate pain and suffering. When animal holding facilities are damaged and horses are loose, attempts should be made to separate stallions or aggressive horses and try to group horses in safe circumstances as alternate housing is determined and found. Loose horses can be dangerous to approach and only experienced individuals should be allowed to help in animal capture, identification, and rescue.

In today's world, the equine practitioner must prepare him or herself, family, the practice, and clients for what to do in a disaster situation. The preparation must be as thorough as possible, knowing that circumstances will highlight the weaknesses rather than the strengths of those involved. Once the catastrophe strikes the veterinarian will be seen as an important professional resource. One must understand who the other resources are and what their plan is in order for a coordinated response to result.

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RESOURCE LINKS FOR DISASTER AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

National Resources

National Association for Search and Rescue
www.nasar.org

National Disaster Medical System
www.oep-ndms.dhhs.gov/

Animal Disaster Relief through the AVMA Foundation
www.avma.org/vmat/default.hsp

Animal Rescue Plans

AVMA Resources, with many links
www.avma.org/vmat/disasterbrochure.asp

North Carolina State Animal Response Team
www.ncsart.org

Felton Fire District (California) Large Animal Rescue
www.feltonfire.com

South Carolina Large Animal Rescue
www.clemson.edu/ep/lart

West Palm Beach Large Animal Rescue
www.co.palm-beach.fl.us/fire/

American Red Cross Barnyard Animal Rescue Plan
www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/barnyard.html

ASPCA/National Animal Poison Control Center
www.napcc.asPCA.org

Community disaster plan structure under “Planning Guidelines” as well as other valuable resources.
www.animaldisasters.com

Education

FEMA Independent Study

<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/ishome.htm>

Free courses available on “Animals in Disasters,” “Live Stock in Disasters,” and “Basic Incident Command” are highly recommended

“The Role of the Veterinary Community in Disaster Preparedness and Response.” (Proceedings, NCVV Annual Conference, Nov. 2000)

Recommended Books:

AVMA Disaster Preparedness and Response Guide (Contact AVMA)

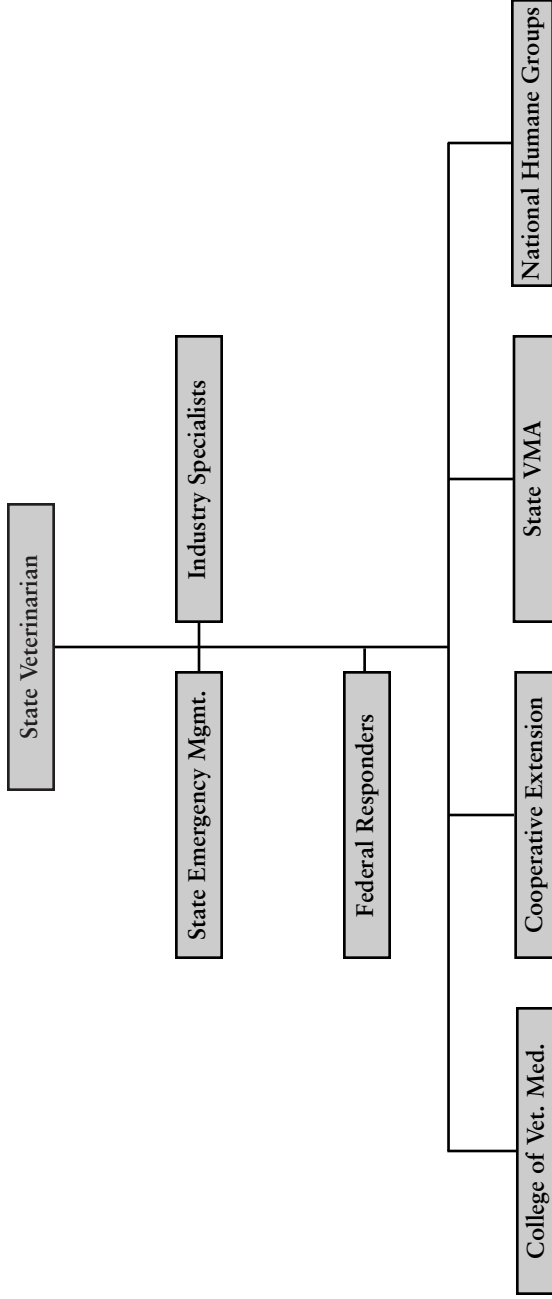
Animal Management in Disasters by Sebastian Heath

Rescuing Rover: A First Aid and Disaster Guide for Dog Owners
by Sebastian Heath

Manual of Equine Emergencies by J.A. Orsini and T.J. Divers,
Editors. 2nd ed. 2002, W.B. Saunders

The AAEP Emergency & Disaster Preparedness Guidelines are intended to be a point-of-reference or framework to direct specific activities of veterinarians as they employ emergency preparedness concepts and systems in their practices. These guidelines are neither regulations nor directives for all situations and should not be interpreted as such. Veterinarians should contact local authorities for their county-specific requirements.

NATURAL DISASTER ANIMAL RESPONDERS ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



NOTES



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