

Animals in Disasters: What Can You Do?

Brief History:

In emergencies and disasters, the first priority is protection of life, property, and the environment. Unfortunately, in the not so recent past, this has not included a coordinated response for the evacuation, care, and sheltering of animals.

Although the protection of human life is the highest priority in emergency response, recent disasters and follow-up research have shown that appropriate preparation and effective coordination of animal issues enhances the ability of emergency personnel to protect both human and animal health and safety.

Disasters of the past decade have illuminated the existence of a human/animal bond that has time and again affected the behavior of large segments of the population and how they behave in disaster situations. It is much more efficient, effective, and inexpensive to develop plans to address animal issues prior to an incident than during one. Therefore, it is essential that all citizens, emergency responders and public health professionals, prepare for incidents that may result in separation of animals from their homes or companion caretakers during disasters.

Types of Disasters Likely in Johnson County:

- Flood
- Severe Thunderstorm (lightning, hail, wind)
- Hazardous Materials (fixed facility or transportation)
- Severe Heat
- Tornado
- Drought
- (e.g., airplane, bus, semi, train)
- Earthquake
- Civil Disturbance
- Human Disease Epidemic
- Chemical Spills
- Winter Storm
- Fire
- Transportation Accident
- Terrorism/Bioterrorism
- Animal Disease Epidemic

Awareness and Preparedness:

It is likely that a disaster or emergency situation that impacts the welfare of

animals will also be impacting the welfare of humans. Emergency management and response officials must take this factor into consideration when prioritizing resource allocation during a disaster or emergency situation that impacts animals and will need to prioritize resource allocation accordingly, particularly in the initial response to the situation when resources are the most limited.

The sheltering and protection of companion animals is the responsibility of their owners first and foremost. It is unreasonable to believe that local agencies would be able to house all animals of evacuees. Pet owners should devise their own family disaster preparedness plan and ensure the care of their own animals is considered.

Public Service Agency Responsibility:

1. Develop and maintain plans to provide for adequate care of animals in times of emergencies.
2. Develop procedures to inform and educate the public of the need to be prepared to care for their animals during disasters.
3. Identify essential public and private facilities and develop measures to provide for their utilization in emergency situations.
4. Assign emergency responsibilities and provide training of volunteers.
5. Review and update plans and procedures on a regular basis.

Animal Population in Iowa:

Companion Animal Estimate

There are no records that provide information on the number of companion animals in Johnson County. The best way of estimating the number is to use statistics provided by the American Veterinarian Medical Association:

percentage of households with animals

Dogs: 31.6%

Cats: 27.3%

Birds: 4.6%

number of animals per household

Dogs: 1.69

Cats: 2.19

Birds: 2.74

Using the above statistics, an estimate of the number of companion animals in Johnson County is:

Dogs: 23,540

Cats: 26,354

Birds: 5,556

Specific Emergency Management Issues Relative to Animals in Disaster and Emergency Situations Include:

Refusal to Evacuate:

People with companion animals frequently will choose not to evacuate rather than leave animals behind. Since human evacuation shelters generally do not allow pets in facilities, pet owners requiring sheltering must choose between deserting their animals, refusing to evacuate, or evacuating their animals to a pre-determined site. Some people will live in their cars or stay on the streets rather than abandon their animals. Farmers who depend upon animals for their livelihood are often unwilling to leave their animals unsupervised in the event of a disaster.

- Up to 25 percent of pet owners will fail to evacuate because of their animals; this represents 5-10 percent of the total population directed to evacuate.
- 30-50% of pet owners will leave pets behind, even with advance notice of evacuation.

Early Return to Unsafe Areas:

People will try to re-enter dangerous or endangered areas to retrieve animals left behind, putting themselves as well as emergency personnel at risk.

- Approximately 50-70 percent of people leaving animals behind will attempt to reenter a secure site to rescue their animals; this represents 5-15 percent of the total population directed to evacuate.
- The 10-25 percent of individuals who refuse to evacuate, or attempt to return to the evacuated areas because of their animals, risk injury, exposure to hazardous materials, and their own lives, as well as those of emergency

response personnel who must rescue them.

Public Health and Safety Risks Caused by Animals at Large:

Animals that are not cared for by their owners during a disaster may become confused and scared posing a public health and safety risk. Loose and displaced animals are possible carriers of disease (e.g., rabies) and can become a nuisance or danger to people. Animals “at large” are the responsibility of local officials in charge of animal services.

Public Health and Safety Risks Caused by Animal Carcasses:

Decaying carcasses can contaminate water sources or lead to outbreaks of diseases such as cholera or anthrax. Timely carcass removal is critical. The methods for environmentally acceptable disposal of animal carcasses are limited, and become particularly difficult and expensive when there are many carcasses.

Public Relations Considerations:

Society views animals as dependent upon human care and support. Many pets are considered integral parts of families. Animals and animal issues attract media attention. This is particularly true during a disaster. The failure to deal with animal issues in disasters not only results in using more resources and placing additional human lives at risk, but it can result in significant public outcry and negative media coverage.

Management of Self-Responders/Volunteer:

Experience has shown that when animals are impacted by disasters, a large number of self-responders will arrive to address the situation. These well-meaning, but generally untrained and emotionally driven individuals can be disruptive and create many law enforcement challenges. Additional self-responders may be animal rescue groups, some of which are well-trained and helpful, some not.

Effective management and task appointment of self-responding individuals, rescue groups and other volunteers is critical. This can occur only when a well-coordinated official response is in place. It is also recommended that official responding agencies have a plan in place for management of volunteers. Friends of the Animal Center Foundation operate and coordinate shelter volunteers in conjunction with the animal services director. **The importance of volunteers in disaster response and recovery should not be minimized and should be a part of any disaster plan.**

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The sheltering and protection of companion animals is the responsibility of their owners. Coinciding with their own family disaster preparedness planning, animal owners should plan for animal care during disasters.

Increased Readiness: a natural or human-made disaster is imminent and threatening the local area:

1. Alert on-duty personnel
2. Monitor the situation and be prepared to mobilize if necessary.
3. Notify volunteers of possibility of impending emergency situation.
4. Contact resources for temporary emergency housing of companion animals and livestock.

Response:

1. Coordinate local emergency response procedures with the statewide support network.
2. Manage and direct evacuation of animals from risk areas and provide technical assistance to prevent animal injury and disease outbreak.
3. Secure supplies, equipment, personnel and technical assistance from support agencies, organizations, and other resources to carry out the response plans associated with animal health emergency management.
4. Provide assistance to established (or emergency) animal shelters.

Recovery:

1. Continue to augment services to provide for rapid recovery.
2. Restore equipment and supplies to normal state of readiness.
3. Coordinate public information and provide situation reports in a timely manner.
4. Maintain financial records on personnel, supplies and other resources utilized and report to the emergency management agency upon request.
5. Resume normal operations.

Volunteer Responders' Equipment List

The following list of items is highly recommended for disaster animal response individuals and teams.

NECESSARY ITEMS:

- Agency-specific work attire, including long pants. Guidance will be given depending on the nature of the event. Work boots
- Organizational ID - Q-Card
- Proof of vaccinations/training

FOOD/WATER:

- Personal water needs for 2-3 days
- Gatorade or similar
- Non-perishable food for 3 days (may include protein/energy bars; raisins, dried fruit, trail mix; cheese crackers; morning breakfast snacks; snack food; MRE's, etc)
- Utensils if needed (can opener, fork)

SUGGESTED CLOTHING:

- Rain jacket and pants
- Rain boots
- Bandana(s)
- Hat/cap
- Work gloves
- Reflective vest
- Sweatshirt
- Sweat pants
- Shorts (when not working)

- Jacket
- Jeans (if not part of mandatory attire)
- Comfortable shoes (for off-duty)
- Sleepwear
- Underclothes
- Thermal underwear (if appropriate)
- Socks
- Swimsuit & flip-flops (for showers)

GENERAL RESPONSE PERSONAL GEAR & ACCESSORIES

- Tent with stakes & hammer
- Tent light (if desired)
- Tarp
- Mattress pad/cot & hand pump (if desired)
- Pillow & pillowcase (compact, if desired)
- Sleeping bag or sheets & blanket
- Travel alarm clock
- Waterproof watch
- Hard hat (for field rescue)
- Head lamp or flashlight with extra batteries
- Canteen/refillable water bottles
- Swiss army knife/Leatherman/similar all-purpose tool
- Compass
- Binoculars with case
- Towels/wash cloth
- Soap
- Shampoo & conditioner
- Deodorant
- Brush/comb/hair bands
- Toothbrush & toothpaste
- Water purification system (iodine tabs, filter)
- Eye drops
- Ear plugs
- Breathing mask and filters
- Lip balm
- Anti-itch cream
- Medications (OTC and prescription)
- Feminine hygiene products (as necessary)
- Hand sanitizer (Purell or similar)
- Q-tips
- Cotton balls
- Lotion
- Tissues/Kleenex
- Vitamins
- Toilet paper

- Sun Screen/sun block
- Insect Repellent
- Small first aid kit
- Sunglasses (with case and neck rope)
- Fanny pack/knapsack/backpack/utility belt (personal choice)
- Emergency whistle
- Battery-operated or crank radio (extra batteries as needed)
- Note pad & pens/pencils
- Animal handling equipment (If requested)
- Cash, credit card, keys; (As needed; secure on person or locked vehicle; Take ONLY what you NEED)
- Camera (As needed; secure on person or locked vehicle)
- PDA (As needed; secure on person or locked vehicle)
- LIMIT jewelry, valuables, irreplaceable items. Disaster locations are often unsecured.

Responders who do not hold certifications in the following fields DO NOT need to have, or bring, the following gear.

WATER-DISASTER SPECIFIC GEAR:

- PFD (personal flotation device – US Coast Guard Type III or IV)
- Water or climbing helmet (must cover back of head & drain water)
- Full dry suit
- Whistle for water use
- Waterproof flashlight with extra batteries
- Goggles
- Thick-soled water booties
- Rescue knife
- Pack with water bottles
- Night-glow light sticks

FIRE-DISASTER SPECIFIC GEAR (MUST BE **NFPA-APPROVED**):

- Red card
- Nomex/Endura Cotton wildland fire shirt
- Nomex/Endura Cotton wildland fire pants
- Wildland fire gloves
- Fire helmet
- Work boots (minimum 8 inches tall; no steel toes; no rubber soles)
- Goggles
- Compass
- Fireline handbook
- Fire shelter
- Nomex shroud

- Bandana
- Lighter
- Pack with water bottles
- Rescue knife

TECHNICAL RESCUE GEAR (MUST BE NFPA-APPROVED):

- Full climbing harness
- Climbing helmet (must cover back of head & drain water)
- Rope gloves
- Rope (static and dynamic)
- Carabiners (locking); steel for anchors
- Pulleys
- Fig 8
- Belay device
- Webbing
- Radio
- Rappel rack
- Bandana/sweat guard
- Eye protection
- Pack with water bottles
- Radio chest harness
- Rescue knife

AGENCY CONTACT LIST

1. Iowa City Animal Services/Iowa City Animal Center
4852 Sand Road
Iowa City, Iowa 52240
319-356-5295
Misha-goodman@iowa-city.org
www.icanimalcenter.org
2. Friends of the Animal Center Foundation
www.FACF.org
Volunteer@FACF.org
3. Johnson County Humane Society
www.johnsoncountyhumane.org

4. Humane Society of the United States
www.HSUS.org
5. National Animal Control Association
www.nacanet.org
6. ASPCA
www.aspca.org
7. FEMA
www.fema.gov
8. Johnson County Emergency Management
<http://www.johnson-county.com/emergencymgmt/links.shtml>
Also includes many links to information and services in the area.