National Alliance of State Animal and Agricultural Emergency Programs (NASAAEP)

Preparedness and Community Outreach Best Practices

NASAAEP Preparedness and Community Outreach Best Practices Working Group

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Preface

When the Preparedness and Community Outreach Best Practice Working Group (PCOWG) met for the first time at the NASAAEP Summit Meeting in Kansas City in December 2009, we asked ourselves some defining questions: "What problem are we trying to solve?" "What is our scope?" and "Who are our audiences?" In seeking answers to these questions, we decided on what would eventually become this white paper.

This document discusses how to develop appropriate messaging content in an animal emergency, why message delivery can be just as important as its content, how messaging can be delivered and by whom, and who should be the recipients and why.

Early on, Working Group member Tracey Stevens stated it best when she summarized why messaging is important. By the distribution of appropriate information, an "expanding collaboration between many organizations and individuals will further response and readiness, and create safer, more resilient communities." In other words, the distribution of appropriate information in a timely manner makes preparedness and response more effective, safer, and better.

In keeping with the NASAAEP vision, the working group has attempted to identify the critical best practices related to one key animal emergency support task: communication. The result remains a work in progress and we welcome your input to improve it further. We hope you will find this white paper thought provoking and a good starting point with which to develop your organization's preparedness and outreach communications plan.

Thank you to all members of this working group for their time, energy and creativity in contributing to this paper. We expect it will continue to be refined in the future.

Sincerely,

Arnold L. Goldman DVM, MS President, NASAAEP

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Introduction

All-hazard preparedness by people for their own households, including their pets or service animals, is an important part of emergency planning. If people are prepared and able to help themselves and their pets, this frees disaster responders to use community resources for those who have special needs or are more severely affected by a disaster.

Preparedness messaging should be designed for and aimed at specific populations, with special attention to how the message is said as well as what is said. You may need multiple messages or deliveries to reach specific groups of people that may be displaced or separated from each other in an emergency.

This paper provides advice for delivering messages to your community and ideas to consider when planning effective ways of delivering your messages.

"Whole Community" Approach

As is the case with any major disaster, government at all levels must deal with the limitations of what it can do to respond quickly and effectively. In local disasters, federal and state government can expand its reach and deliver services better by working with institutions, groups, and individuals already active in the affected communities. In disasters over a larger area, the needs of survivors may be greater than what the federal and state governments can provide. For this reason, the response to a local emergency should use local resources whenever possible, drawing on people in the community in addition to local government, with state and federal involvement limited to support and logistics functions.

In a national disaster, the response should be national—not federal. Private corporations, faith-based organizations and humanitarian non-governmental organizations can all help in responding to a national emergency. The success of the nation's response will depend upon each level of government working together with these non-governmental groups and combining their resources.

The "whole community" approach represents a new way of dealing with emergencies, from preparedness to recovery. Whole community emergency management:

- Understands and meets the needs of the *whole* community;
- Involves all aspects of the community (public, private, and civic) in defining those needs and devising ways to meet them; and
- Strengthens what works well in communities each day to improve their ability to recover as quickly as possible from a disaster.

As communities are made of up of many distinct audiences, it will be important for you to seek input and ideas on how to get communities to participate in disaster preparedness at all levels, including the support of animals. Critical to this outreach is:

- Using existing relationships and networks whenever you can
- Reaching out and communicating through sources you know and trust
- Understanding and listening to what members of the community need
- Offering real benefits that address a genuine need
- Recognizing and supporting communities' capabilities
- Giving people the power to act

For more information on "Whole Community" planning, visit:
http://www.emforum.org/vforum/FEMA/Resilience.pdf

How to Develop Content for Messaging

Before you start developing your message, consider your audience, what you are trying to get across to them, what you want them to do, and possible methods for delivering the message (see "Delivery of Your Message" below). Consider whether any existing materials will serve the purpose (see "Resources").   If you wish to create your own piece, refer to the "Outreach Materials Considerations."   Whether you use new materials or existing materials, consider comparing the products against the checklist.

Many commercially available preparedness materials do not use appropriate messaging regarding animals. If you are using these as part of your overall preparedness outreach, consider changing the wording to reflect the jurisdiction's emergency plan for animals.

Outreach Materials Considerations

Audience

Consider the audience you want to reach. You might have messages prepared especially for emergency managers, veterinary professionals, and the public.

- Who do you want your message to reach?   Is your audience mixed in terms of ages, ethnic groups, education levels, and income? Are you reaching those who cannot self-evacuate as well as those who can? You may have separate messages for different audiences. For example, messages to children will be different than messages to adults, yet key points may reach children's parents via children more effectively than products directly marketed to adults.

- Is the message clear and appropriate for the specific group receiving it? The message needs to consider their particular needs, values, and situation.

- Can you invite a native speaker(s) and others from the target community to review the product? For example, not all Spanish speakers share the same culture and language. Try to engage the local ethnic community for help in reviewing translation.

- Does the message tell who is responsible for providing support for animals? Does it clearly communicate whom to contact for more help and when?

- How will your message encourage citizens to comply? Are there incentives for getting citizens to comply, and are the incentives clearly stated?

- Does the message cover the right area (geographically) that might have the problem? There are areas in every jurisdiction that have emergencies that happen again and again. For example, coastal areas in your jurisdiction will have different messaging needs from desert, dry areas.

Content

Below are some questions you should consider when developing the content of the message:

- What are the key points for your message? Does your content convey your message clearly? (Who, what, where, when and how?)

- What are the actions you'd like to be taken after reading your materials?

- Does the message address most likely disasters? Does the material talk about risks common to your area?

- Does the message provide sources for more information? Is it clear whom to contact for more help?

- Does your message offer options? What if the top recommendations are not good options for all of your audience? What if your message fails?

- Are the facts presented in your message really facts? Can they be documented? Are you conveying the most current and accurate information at the appropriate level of detail?

- Does your message provide an appropriate timeline (72 hours versus 7 days)? Are there timelines for different types of events? For example, tornadoes and fires move more quickly than hurricanes.

- Does the message define success? What is the intended end result for your communication at both the individual and the jurisdictional level? For example, are you trying to increase self-evacuation by a certain percentage since your last disaster?

- Do your materials describe simply how individuals can gather supplies for their animal "to go" kits? Are there suggestions on where to find off-the-shelf kits?

- Is your message achievable? Wil people be able to follow your instructions?

- What is an appropriate starting point in developing your message? Remember that there are many materials already available. It may be more efficient to use another jurisdiction's materials as a starting point.

Other Messaging Considerations

Make sure that your jurisdiction's animal response plan reflects current best practice and is an effective model. For example, does your community shelter-in-place, do you recommend the use of surrogate caretakers, or do you use co-located companion animal shelters with human shelters?

- Does your plan offer easily accessible options for people? For example, can an animal be evacuated in a pillowcase?

- Consider animals not covered by the PETS act, such as horses, livestock, exhibition animals and research animals. Owners are responsible for making arrangements for evacuation of species not listed in the Act if local shelters will not take them. Does the message encourage practicing the plan? For example, will your horse get into a trailer?

- Does your message make recommendations on what to include in a 72-hour kit for companion animals? The list can be basic or more elaborate. Consider your audience and whether they're likely to prepare a kit or not. If they're not likely to do so, keep the recommendations simple.

- Does your message explain clearly the difference between "shelter in place" and leaving your animals behind? Your audience needs to understand that companion animals should be evacuated along with people and that sheltering in place occurs when people are directed to do so. Simply put, companion animals follow their owners.

- Does your message make recommendations for methods of evacuation? Are companion animals allowed on public buses/transportation in your jurisdiction's emergency plan? If so, say so! List any requirements, such as animals must be on leash or in a carrier.

- Do you provide recommendations for places to go if evacuation is required? If possible, list hotels and boarding facilities in your jurisdiction that welcome companion animals.

- Consider breaking out information by (1) what to do to prepare before the emergency, and (2) what to do at the time of the emergency.

Delivery of Your Message

Conduct A Needs Assessment

Effective delivery of your all-hazard animal preparedness message to your target populations is necessary and important and should be promoted as part of overall personal preparedness. By engaging diverse community members in your planning process, you will have additional personnel and resources for communicating your message.

There are many ways of delivering your message to a community.   To determine which ways will work best, it is important to identify who lives in your jurisdiction and decide what kind of communication will reach them most effectively. In deciding this, consider racial, ethnic, economic, cultural and geographic differences, values regarding animal care and ownership, access to media and technology, and the ability of specific groups of people to prepare for a disaster.

Use Community Partnerships to Share Your Message

Successful communication will require that relationships are built with your target populations' trusted community partners.

Once the message has been developed, identify a target population. Distinct communities (racial, ethnic, cultural, economic, and geographic) within the jurisdiction need to be recognized and outreach methods tailored to each. Identify trusted community partners that are connected to these communities.   Each partner will be unique in the services they provide and the clients they serve, and your outreach planning should take this into account.

Consider the following partner organizations when developing your outreach strategy. Be sure to include ongoing guidance to partners to assure preparedness messages are shared regularly:

1. Reach out to businesses and organizations that serve animals and their owners, including veterinary clinics, animal shelters, livestock associations, pet stores, kennels, Cooperative Extension and equine boarding facilities. Encourage these stakeholders to educate their clientele on animal preparedness and to develop a business preparedness plan for animals in their care.

2. Recruit organizations traditionally engaged in large-scale disaster planning and response such as local emergency management agencies and fire departments. Other potential partners include citizen preparedness and response groups such as Citizen Corps, Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), State and Community/County Animal Response Teams (SART/CART), State Departments of Agriculture, Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) and Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD). The most localized will be able to identify the target population's needs and provide opportunities for outreach. Remember that those involved with the human services sector of disaster should recognize that animal response is part of

human response. People's behavior will be impacted by the options available for their animals.

3. Look to organizations that are not traditionally animal or emergency management groups. These will often have the greatest influence on reaching your target population. They can include grassroots organizations, human service providers, community/economic development organizations, civic and cultural groups, faith-based organizations, schools, small business leaders and local churches. Engage them as partners in your planning and outreach processes. These organizations are good resources for determining target population(s), who the leaders are, and who is most trusted.

There are many methods available for effectively delivering the all hazards animal preparedness message. Media such as television news, newspaper, radio, and newsprint, as well as community fairs, individual organization meetings, libraries, and direct mailings within other official correspondence are all viable and sometimes free methods of outreach delivery. Use your community partners to gain a better understanding of what will work best for your target population. The type of outreach material will depend on the culture, tradition, and values of the target population.

Adjustments to methodology should be considered based on regular meetings with community leaders, tracking the results of outreach activities, and evaluating comments and feedback. Surveys and focus groups help determine the usability of materials and track results in the target population(s). Community partners will not only provide a venue for delivery of the message but will provide the target population with assistance whenever possible. Keep your community partners informed and involved in the process and they will lead the way toward improved community preparedness.

Funding

There are three primary types of financial resources: government, private foundation/non-profit, and corporate:

1. Local, state and federal governments are responsible for considering household pets in emergency plans, based on the PETS Act and PKEMRA. Thus, animal preparedness and community outreach are recognized as legitimate activities in emergency preparedness. Reach out to officials in your state or territory for information on funding opportunities. The following programs might be available to support your activities:

- Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP)
- State Homeland Security Program (SHSP)
  - Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI)
  - Citizen Corps Program (CCP)
- Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG)

A Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), Fire Corps , or Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) may be operating in your community. The Citizen Corps programs support community preparedness outreach and activities. Develop partnerships with these groups to communicate your animal preparedness messages.

The United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (USDA-APHIS) Animal Care program is charged with providing technical assistance and subject matter expertise on the safety and well-being of household pets during disasters. In advance of an

emergency, this means facilitating household pet emergency management discussions among Federal, State, territorial, tribal, and local governments, as well as nongovernmental organizations, as they develop and exercise disaster response plans.

Check with your state animal and agricultural programs for possible financial and material resources. A list of these organizations may be found at www.nasaaep.org.

2. <u>Private foundations and non-profit organizations</u> with interest in animal welfare may have funds available for animal preparedness activities. Some are specific to certain states or localities and others are national in scope.

3. <u>Corporations</u> engaged in animal care may support animal preparedness activities. Look to local business and national chains, such as PetSmart Charities, that are operating in your community.

Evaluating Funding Sources

1. Understand the goals of the program from which you are seeking funds.

2. Learn where your activities fit into the program and focus on those that seek to improve citizen preparedness.

3. Be sure your group is eligible to apply for funds. If not, see if there are partnerships you can build with eligible organizations to access funds.

4. Integrate animal preparedness into general citizen preparedness activities by becoming a part of an existing community preparedness group.

5. Partner with groups that are connected to your target population (community organizations, faith-based institutions, local emergency preparedness and response) to make your funding request stronger.

<u>Other Planning and Preparedness Resources</u>

- The [American Red Cross](#) has developed pet preparedness materials and your local chapter can be a partner in getting out the message. While Red Cross shelters do not accept animals, they are a strong partner in community preparedness activities, including activities involving animals.

- The National Animal Rescue and Sheltering Coalition (NARSC) is a collaboration of the major national animal protection organizations in the United States. Participants in the coalition include the most experienced, qualified animal rescue and sheltering management professionals in the country. Many of the member organizations have developed animal preparedness materials that can be used to support your local efforts.

- The [American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)](#) has disaster preparedness materials available. Also contact your local and state veterinary medical associations for opportunities.

Evaluating Disaster Preparedness and Planning Resources

Below are some useful considerations to keep in mind when deciding on messaging preparedness and planning content.

- Current – Does the material meet national, state and local emergency planning needs?

- Relevant – Does the material match local risks?

- Accessible – Is the material available in electronic form and in print? Is it easy to read?

- Accurate - Does it reflect current best practice?

- Complete – Does the material provided cover both evacuation and return?

- Concise – Is the detail level appropriate? Remember less is generally more.

- Achievability – Does the material meet your expectations?

- Affordable – Is the material available for free download or postal delivery?

Conclusion

Selection of appropriate messaging content can be as important as its delivery. Messages should be written so that they reach the specific audiences that you select. Successful and effective community outreach will improve emergency response and readiness and, ultimately, will create safer and stronger communities.

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Appendix I

Examples of Preparedness Literature

- Local/State resources on all-hazard animal preparedness, such as:
  http://www.readycolorado.com/pdf/PetBrochureF.pdf
    - http://www.readycolorado.com/pdf/LivestockBrochureF.pdf
    - http://www.floridadisaster.org/petplan.htm
    - http://www.nyc.gov/html/oem/downloads/pdf/pets_english.pdf

- United States Department of Homeland Security
  http://www.ready.gov/america/getakit/pets.html

- Federal Emergency Management Agency
  http://www.fema.gov/plan/prepare/animals.shtm#1

- United States Centers for Disease Control
  http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/petprotect.asp

- American Red Cross
  http://www.redcross.org/portal/site/en/menuitem.86f46a12f382290517a8f210b80f78a0/?vgnextoid=7d4994eeef052210VgnVCM10000089f0870aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default

- American Veterinarian Medical Association
  http://www.avma.org/disaster/

- National Animal Rescue and Shelter Coalition
  http://www.narsc.net/about/

- American Humane Association
  http://www.americanhumane.org/animals/programs/emergency-services/community-preparedness/

- The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals
  http://www.aspca.org/pet-care/disaster-preparedness/