

Accommodating Pets in Disasters: What You Should Know

4th Annual VT Healthcare
Preparedness
Conference
June 3, 2011

Kristin M. Haas, D.V.M.
Vermont State
Veterinarian
Vermont Agency of
Agriculture, Food &
Markets



Why is this issue important?



Three

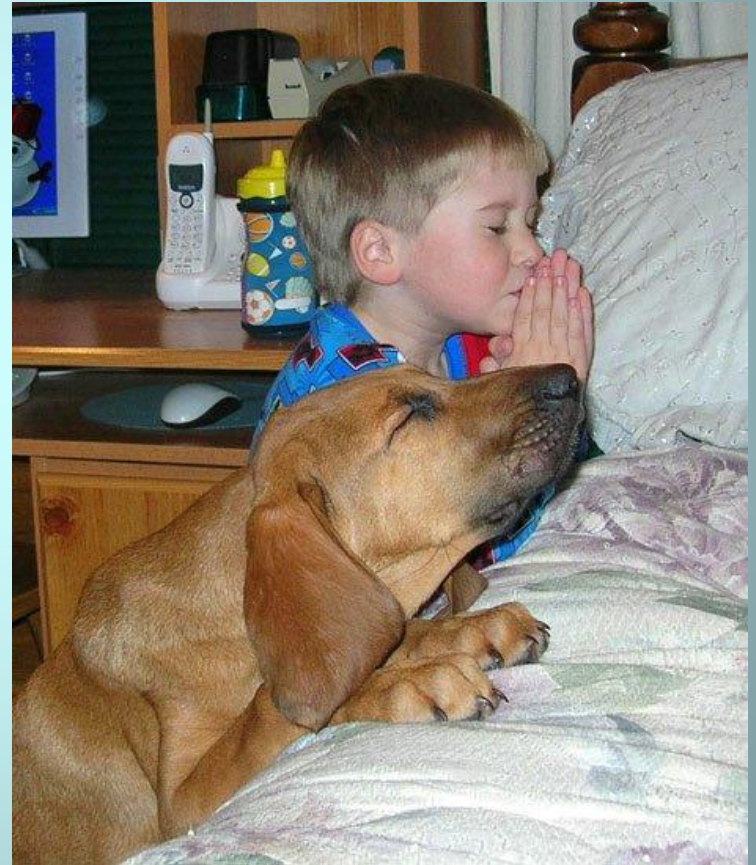
Reasons:

- Pet ownership statistics
- PETS Act
- Historical precedent & the human-animal bond
 - Large scale emergencies
 - Small scale emergencies



Pet Ownership Statistics

- **75%** of households in Vermont include animals (Tufts ec. impact study)
- Of the 2/3 of U.S. households that have pets, **45%** have more than one pet (HSUS)
- Pets are usually considered “**family members**” by their owners



Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards (PETS) Act

- Signed by President Bush on October 6, 2006
- Requires that local and state emergency preparedness authorities include plans for pets and service animals in their disaster plans in order to qualify for grants from FEMA
- Grants FEMA the authority to assist states and local communities in developing disaster plans to accommodate people with pets and service animals
- Authorizes federal funds to help create pet-friendly emergency shelter facilities
- Allows FEMA to provide assistance for individuals with pets and service animals, and the animals themselves, following a major disaster

PETS Act Definitions

- *Household Pet.* A domesticated animal, such as a dog, cat, bird, rabbit, rodent, or turtle that is traditionally kept in the home for pleasure rather than for commercial purposes, can travel in commercial carriers, and be housed in temporary facilities. Household pets do not include reptiles (except turtles), amphibians, fish, insects/arachnids, farm animals (including horses), and animals kept for racing purposes.
- *Service Animal.* Any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability including, but not limited to, guiding individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals with impaired hearing to intruders or sounds, providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, or fetching dropped items.

The Human-Animal Bond and Historical Precedent



The Human-Animal Bond



- **The Human-Animal Bond is a dynamic relationship between people and animals where each influences the psychological and physiological state of the other.**
- **Protecting pets protects people**

Pet Ownership

Physiological/Psychological Benefits

Pets can decrease:

- Blood pressure
- Cholesterol levels
- Triglyceride levels
- Feelings of loneliness

Pets can increase:

- Opportunities for exercise and outdoor activities
- Opportunities for socialization

Large Scale Emergencies



Hurricane Katrina

- Forty-four percent of people did not evacuate for Katrina because they did not want to leave their pets. Eighteen percent did not evacuate because of relatives. –Fritz Institute, 2006 survey
 - Approximately 259,400 families owned pets in Orleans Parish before the storm.
 - As many as 104,000 pets were left behind after Katrina; about 15,000 were officially rescued.
 - An estimated 3,000 have been reunited with their families, and at least 88,700 remain unaccounted for.
- LA/SPCA statistics

Small Scale Emergencies





This issue is important because...

Successful emergency response plans for people often depend on the plans for those peoples' pets

What is Happening in VT?



Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets



What is happening in VT?

- Agency of Agriculture is responsible for carrying out animal-related State Support Function-11 responsibilities.
- State Veterinarian is the “Team Leader” as referenced in the State Emergency Operations Plan and associated annexes.
 - These plans are currently being revised.
 - These plans are always in draft form/must be approved by Vermont Emergency Management (VEM).
 - Plans are available on VEM website or via email from my office.

Development of VDART, Inc.

- Vermont Disaster Animal Response Team
- Non-profit umbrella organization
- Not “boots on the ground”
- Intended to facilitate development of regional DARTs through:
 - Charter membership
 - Participation of regional volunteers on VDART Board of Directors
 - Fundraising capabilities/training opportunities

Vermont's Operating Regional DARTs

- Rutland Area
Disaster Animal
Response Team
(RADART)
- Upper Valley Disaster
Animal Response
Team (UVDART)



Equipment/Resource Acquisition

- 2 Companion Animal Mobile Equipment Trailers (CAMETs)
- Mobile Housing Trailer
- Miscellaneous equipment (cattle panels, loading chutes, head gates)

The goal is to bolster LOCAL response capabilities because ALL emergencies start locally.



Veterinary/Vet Tech Activity

- Primarily handled by the Vermont Veterinary Medical Association & the Vermont Veterinary Technician Association (VVMA/VVTA)
- Tasks
 - Establishment of a VT vet response corps
 - Utilization of VERV to capture pertinent information and to issue emergency alerts
 - Engagement of veterinary technicians for “boots on the ground” resources
 - Completion goal – September 2011

Ongoing Training

- ICS 100 and 200 training – International Fund for Animal Welfare – spring 2008
- VT-NH disaster animal response training – North Carolina SART-spring 2010
- Agricultural Emergency Response Training – multiple classes held annually in Anniston, Al. Agency of Agriculture staff and private sector responders have attended each year.
- Kirkwood Community College training tentatively scheduled for this summer

CERT Curriculum Additions

- Community Emergency Response Team
 - Animal Response 1 module – 3 hrs
 - Emergency preparedness for animal owners
 - Recognition of specific animal behaviors
 - Animal Response 2 module – 4 hrs
 - Simulated hands-on training
 - Preparation for situations involving animals that may be encountered during broader response efforts

www.citizencorps.gov/cert/training_mat.shtm

Animal Sheltering Challenges



VT Shelter Facilities

- **Barre Auditorium**
- St. Albans Town Educational Center
- Mt. Anthony Union Middle School
- **Bennington High School**
- Hartford High School
- **Champlain Valley Union High School**
- Brattleboro High School
- Springfield High School
- Rutland High School
- North Country Union High School

Barre Auditorium Shelter

Activated during
spring 2011
flooding...



The American Red Cross Can Only Shelter Service Animals

- Health and sanitation
- Allergies – many people have animal allergies
- Animal exercise requirements
- Client fears – some may be terrified
- Over-crowded conditions
- Noise
- Long term stays: days – weeks – months
- **Undesirable animal behavior: biting, running, high anxiety**
- **Zoonoses: diseases that can be transmitted from animals to people**

Good Animal Bites



Bad Animal Bites



Dog Bite Statistics

- Each year, 800,000 Americans seek medical attention for dog bites; half of these are children.
- Of those injured, 386,000 require treatment in an emergency department and about 16 die.
- The rate of dog bite-related injuries is highest for children ages 5 to 9 years, and the rate decreases as children age.
- Injury rates in children are significantly higher for boys than for girls.

Dog Bite Facts

Dog bites typically cause a crushing-type wound because of their rounded teeth and strong jaws. An adult dog can exert 200 pounds per square inch (psi) of pressure, with some large dogs able to exert 450 psi.

Cat Bite Facts

The sharp pointed teeth of cats usually cause puncture wounds and lacerations that may inoculate bacteria into deep tissues. Infections caused by cat bites generally develop faster than those of dogs.

Which dog is more likely to bite?



Risk of Bite From Sheltered Animals is Increased

- Most dog bites involve a dog that belongs to the family or friend of the victim and approximately half occur on the pet owner's property.
- The propensity to bite can be increased in a emergency sheltering environment due to unfamiliar surroundings and animals being handled by people unfamiliar to them.

Zoonoses

- Brucellosis
- Campylobacteriosis
- Cat Scratch Disease
- Cryptosporidiosis
- Hookworm
- Leptospirosis
- Toxoplasmosis
- Roundworm
- Salmonellosis
- Tapeworm infection
- Ringworm
- Scabies
- Rabies

Global Rabies Statistics

- Rabies is a viral disease that infects domestic and wild animals and is spread to people through close contact with infected saliva via bites or scratches. Once symptoms of the disease develop, rabies is nearly always fatal. (CDC)
- Rabies is present on all continents with the exception of Antarctica, but more than 95% (55,000+ annually) of human deaths occur in Asia and Africa - a rate of one person every 10 minutes. (CDC)
- The most important global source of rabies in humans is from uncontrolled rabies in dogs. Children are often at greatest risk from rabies. (CDC)

New England Rabies Statistics

- Rabies is endemic in the wildlife population in New England
- 15 wild animals in Vermont have tested positive for rabies in 2011 thus far, including raccoons, woodchucks and skunks
- With increasing frequency there is concern about human exposure to rabies through infected/unvaccinated livestock
- Rabies is a very real human health concern in sheltering situations

What can you do to help?



Take an active role in your community in animal disaster preparedness & response

- **Encourage your town to develop an animal component to the Emergency Operations Plan**
- **Organize/participate in a DART**
- **Participate in your Local Emergency Planning Commission or Community Emergency Response Team**
- **If first responder, coordinate with local veterinarian to facilitate training in pet first aid for FD personnel and police officers**

Educate your clients & know your colleagues

- Disaster preparedness begins at home
- Get to know your veterinary colleagues
 - Consult if suspect zoonotic disease etiology for human illness – more likely during/following a disaster
 - Consult if family with young children is considering purchase/adoption of a family dog – adoption rate increases following a disaster
 - Consult and encourage inclusion of family animals in emergency evacuation/sheltering plans at the household level

Use your medical expertise to assist emergency response

- If providing triage care at a shelter, acquire the proper training ahead of time and remember pointers from today
- If providing medical care to displaced or evacuated patients, be sensitive to their concerns for their pets and familiarize yourself with pet-related resources that could be of benefit in a crisis.
 - Will facilitate building of a rapport with patients
 - Improves patient compliance

Educate yourself

- Vermont Veterinary Medical Association – find a veterinarian
<http://www.vtvets.org>
- ASPCA – planning tools for families with pets
<http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/disaster-preparedness/>
- AVMA Disaster Planning – planning tools for families with pets
<http://www.avma.org/disaster>
- North Carolina State Animal Response Team – CAMET info
<http://www.ncsart.org>
- Vermont Emergency Management – state plans
<https://vem.vermont.gov/>
- One Health Initiative – uniting human and animal health
<https://onehealthinitiative.com/>



“The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.”

-Mahatma Gandhi

Questions?



State Veterinary Contact Information

Kristin Haas, D.V.M.

Joel Russo, D.V.M.

Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets

116 State Street

Montpelier, Vermont 05620

(802)828-2421

kristin.haas@state.vt.us

Joel.russo@state.vt.us