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North Carolina Veterinary Response Corps

THE VRC CONNECTION

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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Agriculture Emergency Response Team Update

By Dr. Jimmy Tickel, NCDA&CS

As hurricane season winds down, minds turn to fall leaves, cooler weather and the transition to winter. For the "preparedness mind," thoughts turn to winter storms and the potential effects such storms can have on our rural communities and farms. The lack of rapid assistance in some areas of the farm community became an identified need following the tornadoes in April 2011. As a result, Agricultural Emergency Respond Teams (AERTs) teams were conceptualized and developed with the goal of the teams becoming deployable resources for the 2012 storm season.

The focus of AERTs is to provide rural communities and farmers with a mechanism to request help with certain tasks following an event like a tornado, hurricane or winter storm. Extreme weather can leave famers without the infrastructure to carry on their day-to-day operations of caring for animals and crops. Agricultural families are extremely resourceful and proud of their ability to help themselves. However, in catastrophic events, storms can damage equipment or create extenuating circumstances leaving families in distress as response resources are not available since they are first dedicated to human life and safety --as it should be!

AERTs can assist farmers in five task areas to fill gaps in response. These areas include:

- Chain saw work (clearing farm entrances, equipment, feed storage areas, etc.);
- Field debris (clearing debris so that crops can be planted/picked);
- Fence repair (temporary repair to fences to restrain livestock/ horses);
- Harvestability (assisting producers with crops/plants that have been disrupted due to storms—nurseries, tobacco etc) and
- Tarping (placing tarps on feed stuffs, equipment, houses, etc. that have been damaged due to storm).

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NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & CONSUMER SERVICES

Emergency Programs Division

Steve Troxler, Commissioner *Sharron Stewart, Director*

Fort Bragg Orbit Comet Exercise

By Dr. Bruce Akers, NCDA&CS

They're all doing it!!! Even Fort Bragg has walked the pathways blazed by many of North Carolina's counties in establishing co-location sheltering for their citizens/soldiers. Below is description from Mr. Andrew Fischer, Exercise Planner for Fort Bragg, on their recent Orbit Comet Exercise which is a large-scale, annual event focused on hot issues of concern to them and the readiness of their soldiers. Emergency Programs staff has been collaborating with Fort Bragg officials for years as nearly all events that affect them also affect the counties surrounding them, and the soldiers and family members living in those counties.

Here we see exercise participants checking pets in at registration.

Fort Bragg conducted its annual preparedness exercise, ORBIT COMET, on 18 July 2012. This year's exercise was developed to assess the installation's ability to establish a common operating picture/common information picture in WebEOC, establish an emergency casualty assistance center, and coordinate and manage specific mass care operations. The specific goals of the mass care portion of the exercise were to successfully establish a Community/ Family Assistance Center, a pet shelter, and two personnel shelters. More than 60 role players and four dogs participated in the exercise as simulated evacuees.

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COMPLETE YOUR VRC REGISTRATION AT WWW.SERVNC.ORG

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- **Please see our website for future training and activities.**
- **Check out our sheltering webinars now posted on the website!**

REQUIREMENTS FOR VRC DEPLOYMENT

- ICS 100, 200, and 700
- Biosecurity/PPE Training
- Knowledge of NC Emergency Management
- Knowledge of Emergency Support Functions
- Attendance at VRC Meetings
- Sign a Code of Conduct

Participants set up cages for the pet shelter.

Planning and preparations for establishing shelters on Fort Bragg has been a two-year work in progress. Four physical fitness centers were identified early on as potential shelters due to their capabilities, which include back-up generators. Actual preparations included developing five fully stocked pre-positioned disaster shelter container kits (four personnel/one pet) and a shelter handbook to assist units establishing shelters. The pet disaster shelter container kit was developed using the equipment list for North Carolina's Companion Animal Mobile Equipment Trailers as the standard. The unit responsible for establishing the pet shelter began work at 0800 and by 1000 had the shelter operational and ready to receive the first pet. Soldiers covered floors and walls with plastic, erected medium and large animal cages, and established a registration point to register and photograph pets. Army Veterinary Service personnel were on hand to screen animals to ensure the health and safety of both personnel and pets in the shelter. This was a very productive and successful exercise.

Participants practice putting up plastic in the pet shelter.

A registered pet is placed in their crate in the pet shelter.

<u>VRC MISSION</u>: Train and prepare professionals in the animal care community to respond to disaster events (all hazards) that affect both production and companion animals. Our members will serve as a resource for our state and the nation.

<u>NOTES</u>: To see recent news and updates, please visit the VRC website at www.ncvrc.org. If you have questions about the VRC or would like to offer suggestions or articles for future newsletters, contact Mandy at mandy.tolson@ncagr.gov.

NCDA&CS and Partners Prepare for Disaster Response

By Mark Howell, NCDA&CS

On Aug. 1, 2012 the Emergency Programs Division hosted the NCDA&CS annual AgEOC activation exercise, bringing together 55 representatives from NCDA&CS, USDA, local and state emergency management, NC universities, SART, and NCVRC to participate in an activation drill in the agriculture emergency operation center (AgEOC) in Raleigh. This year's exercise reiterated the need to prepare all agriculture response partners by improving the NCDA&CS Ag EOC operational readiness.

The exercise scenario for this year was again focused on hurricane preparedness and response, as these storms typically provide challenges to the agricultural infrastructure of NC and require a wide range of expertise, knowledge and cooperation to protect residents, their animals and property. The fictional "Hurricane Iris," a category 3 storm, approached NC from the Atlantic taking aim at the southeastern portion of the state near Wilmington and adjacent communities.

Exercise participants were again reminded of the need for comprehensive coordinated efforts in response to multi-hazard events with a brief review of the Incident Command System (ICS) and it basic principles. As the storm continued its approach path, discussion of when and how the AgEOC would be activated and partners notified were reviewed. With any storm the integration of partner assets and capabilities into the states response efforts are a key to protecting NC residents and their agriculture interests. For NCDA&CS one of the challenges is the continuation of essential functions in the face of severe weather to protect our food and animal producers and the general public. To accomplish this, several tools were reviewed by participants in the exercise including: Hurrevac- a specific hurricane monitoring program, WebEOC – a web-based emergency coordination tool, IFARM (Integrated Food and Agriculture Response Management) – a web-based reporting and tracking tool, and AgERT's- NCDA&CS's newly developed Agriculture Emergency Response Teams. Participants were also familiarized with the critical equipment and systems available in the AgEOC should an activation occur.

As technology and information dissemination to the public have progressed through the past few years, the methods and means of keeping them informed of protective actions have also been a challenge. Participants were educated by the NCDA&CS Public Affairs Division on efforts to reach citizens "where they're at" through the use of both traditional and social media to provide them with timely and useful information. Additionally, local weather forecaster Bill Reh reinforced the need to reach out with a discussion focused on climate and hurricanes and the potential for increased intensity and frequency based on current modeling.

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Food Recall Table Top Exercise

By Dr. Mandy Tolson, NCDA&CS

On August 22, 2012, the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) conducted a tabletop exercise involving many of the divisions that would respond to a school commodity food recall event. The tabletop exercise was hosted by the Food Distribution Division and facilitated by the Emergency Programs Division. During the half-day exercise participants learned how they would be involved in a potential food recall initiated as the result of a food-borne illness outbreak in the school system. Participants in the tabletop exercise were representatives from schools, the N.C. Department of Public Instruction, USDA Food Commodity warehouses, and divisions from NCDA&CS responsible for food safety which include Food Distribution, Food and Drug Protection, Meat and Poultry Inspection and Emergency Programs.

The Food Distribution Director began the exercise by introducing a scenario devised to be multi-disciplinary in the response phase thus incorporating the activities of core agencies engaged in recalls. Food Distribution gave an overview of the call down system implemented for food calls. The division works within their warehouse and USDA commodity warehouses to make sure recalled foods are identified and destroyed per guidance from the Food and Drug Administration. The Food Distribution Division works closely with local school systems, the Department of Public Instruction and food companies to assist with the identification, removal and destruction of recalled food items.

The Food and Drug Division explained their role in response to recalls with particular focus on a recent food-borne illness outbreak that was traced back to cantaloupes. The Meat and Poultry Inspection Division explained their role and collaboration with USDA, Food Safety Inspection Service during food-borne illnesses that are traced back to ground meat.

Participants learned how a food recall event would evolve from initial illnesses being reported by the Department of Public Health to Food and Drug or Meat and Poultry to how sampling, testing and trace backs are handled by the divisions. Key to the divisions' responses are the goals of protecting the citizens and assisting the businesses and schools with a rapid return to their normal operations. Food and Drug has implemented the use of technology at the field level and added laboratory capability to provide better data collection, testing and reporting which helps with moving toward recovery.

The scenario developed by the team, evoked great questions from the participants. The discussion-based exercise provided a relaxed atmosphere allowing for the opportunity to field questions by all in attendance. Everyone learned about how their partners would respond in a food recall event and how the roles of the partners interface with their own roles. Understanding the necessary collaboration of partners before an event sets in motion seamless interactions when real incidents occur. Having important questions answered before an event helps everyone work efficiently to minimize the effects of an event.

VRC Member Spotlight:
Trinity Smith

Trinity Smith was born and raised in Pennsylvania, where she graduated from Penn State University with a bachelor's degree in Anthropology. Trinity has always worked in veterinary offices, before and after college. In 1999 she was living in San Diego, Calif., and began volunteering at the local county shelter, as well as with a local greyhound rescue group.

At that time the county began taking applications for their eight-week Animal Control Academy; little did she know how much that would change her life!

Trinity graduated from the Academy as Honor Officer (highest GPA) in December 2005 and began work as a field officer for San Diego Department of Animal Services. They were considered 'first responders' and were trained in swift water rescue, wildfire safety, livestock restraint, wildlife handling and more. During her time in San Diego, Hurricane Katrina hit, and everyone in animal welfare was faced with the plight of animals during disasters. The shelter where Trinity worked ended up with more than 100 animals from Katrina. It was overwhelming to see so many animals displaced. It was Katrina and its aftermath that made Trinity realize how lacking most communities were when it came to disaster planning in regards to pets.

Trinity left California in 2006 for New Bern. In New Bern she began working as an ACO for Pamlico County and became involved with disaster sheltering for animals. Under the county emergency management office, Trinity was in charge of emergency sheltering for animals during Tropical Storm Hannah and Hurricane Earl.

Trinity has been working for Craven County as the Animal Control Supervisor since early 2011. She has assisted the Craven CART in the coordination of disaster sheltering for Hurricane Irene and continues to assist with disaster preparedness planning alongside the county's emergency management team, the Craven Cooperative Extension Office and other county departments.

Agriculture Emergency Response Team Update

Continued from page 1

Currently, AERT members are personnel within North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS). Teams have been trained to the tasks and equipped in the areas listed above. The process began in the department with the idea of designing a template, developing safety training and identifying equipment for the future growth of the program. The next steps are to grow the concept locally and involve volunteers from communities with the hope that, over time, rural communities will increase their ability to respond on their own behalf. The assistance of trained agricultural responders is especially needed in the early phases of an event when life safety demands are its highest.

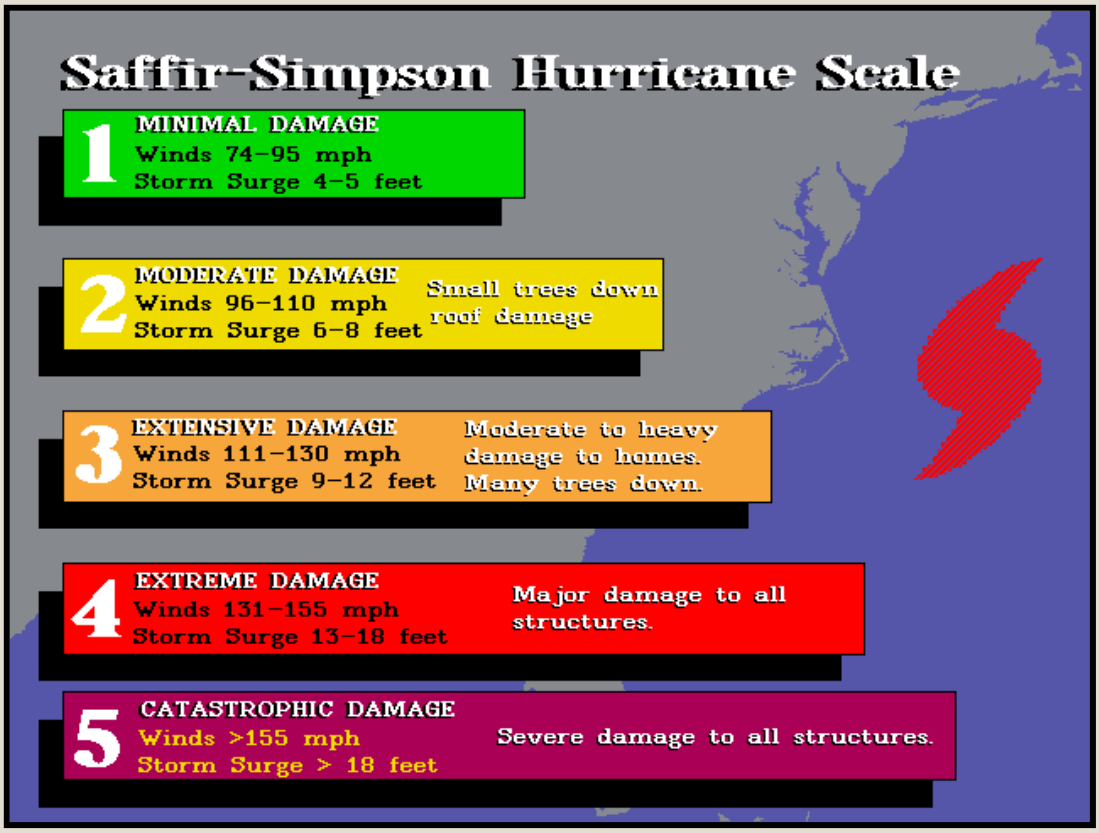
In addition to being trained to the basic tasks, Hazmat Awareness and Safety training, some AERT members have taken a S 212 Forestry Chain Saw class. The week long class was conducted at the Mountain Training Facility near Asheville where 15 members completed the course and are certified to provide assistance with removing fallen trees. There will be more opportunities to attend later trainings and even train the trainer courses.

AERTs have been furnished with two equipment trailers to aid them in conducting the five tasks previously discussed. The trailers will be stationed at NC Forest Service facilities in the eastern and western parts of the state.

Hurricane Preparedness
AgEOC Activation

Continued from page 4.

As this year's hurricane season comes to a close, we here in North Carolina have been fortunate to not have faced a storm with devastating potential, however if history is an indicator, we must remain vigilant in our preparedness efforts. The North Carolina coast can expect to receive a tropical storm or a hurricane once every four years, while a tropical cyclone affects the state every 1.3 years. The state's protruding coastline makes it a favorable target for tropical cyclones that curve northward in the western Atlantic Ocean. The most favored location for tropical cyclones to make landfall in North Carolina is Cape Hatteras. The other two protrusions in the North Carolina coastline, Cape Fear and Cape Lookout, are also favored areas for tropical cyclones to make landfall. Usus Promptos Facit ……if that's Latin to you …Practice Makes Perfect.



Announcing the Ninth

"One Medicine" Symposium

December 5-6, 2012

Sheraton Imperial Hotel and Convention Center | Durham, North Carolina

BUGS vs DRUGS:

A One Medicine Approach to Antimicrobial Resistance

A conference for physicians, nurses, veterinarians, veterinary technicians, public health professionals, environmental health specialists, agriculture professionals, wildlife professionals, and federal, military, state and local disaster responders.

For a full agenda, registration information and other details visit

www.onemedicinenc.org or call **919.515.2261**

- Continuing education is pending for this activity. Please see final announcement for details. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is accredited as a provider of Continuing Nursing Education by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation.
- Registration Fee is $75

Conference objectives:

- Describe the "One Medicine" approach of close cooperation between human and veterinary medicine for effective management of emerging health issues.
- Identify the current status and use of antimicrobials as it relates to my own profession and the environment as a whole.
- Review current issues within the realms of our own professions of particular concern and objectively discuss the effects to the environment.

NCPH North Carolina Public Health | North Carolina Public Health Preparedness & Response PHP&R | Emergency Programs NCDA&CS | UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health | NC State University College of Veterinary Medicine | Office of Professional Development