

Proposed Guidelines for Evacuation and Rescue of Animals during Disasters- North Carolina

Introduction:

Recent history involving natural disasters has illustrated the need to include animal evacuation as an integral part of human evacuation plans while preparing for and responding to such events. These guidelines set forth recommendations for animal owners that will help them prepare to evacuate their animals at the same time they evacuate themselves from threatened areas as well as guidelines for rescue of those animals not evacuated. Past history with hurricanes has shown that owners may leave their animals while evacuating, resulting in the need for sheltering in the affected area. In situations that result in large numbers of animals needing to be sheltered, evacuation of some or of all these pets may need to occur since the affected area may not be able to support large sheltering operations. North Carolina appreciates the role of animal welfare groups and animal rescue groups and is grateful for the assistance that it has received in the past. North Carolina also recognizes the need for these groups in times of disaster to help citizens' animals to survive and then be reunited after the event if circumstances allow. North Carolina also recognizes that some owners, because of dire circumstances, may not be able to care for their pets after catastrophic events and may have to surrender their animals for adoption. Many animal welfare and rescue groups exist on a local, state, and national level that have developed the capability and resources to participate in all phases of animal care and rescue (including rescue, sheltering, and reunification of animals to owners as well as adoption of surrendered animals). Recognizing that animals are considered property of their owners, this document provides guidelines that North Carolina will use to cope with animal issues involving animal care, rescue, sheltering, reunification, as well as adoption after surrender during disaster events. Though the occurrence of epidemic disease or terrorist events have not yet resulted in massive rescue efforts for animals, these guidelines could also apply if such an event presented the need.

Guidelines for events requiring evacuation of humans/animals.

A) Before the event, owners should plan to evacuate and to continue the care for their animals if the need for evacuation presents itself. History has shown that all areas of the State are prone to damage due to hurricanes, tornados, and ice storms that could require evacuation from homes and even areas as large as municipalities.

Suggested considerations for animal owners that are advised to evacuate:

1) Owner evacuation to accommodations other than public emergency shelters:

* Owners should make arrangements to stay with family, friends, or other accommodations some distance away that will accept owners and their pets. Though hurricanes can cause widespread damage, rarely is more than half of the state affected to the degree that shelter cannot be found, usually within 200 miles.

*Owners should have their pets microchipped (by Veterinarians) to aid in the identification of their animals should the owner and animal be separated.

*Owners should plan how they will transport their animals taking into consideration that traffic and delays may mean longer than expected travel times. Travel kennels, pet carriers, trailers etc. should be used to safely confine animals while traveling. Sufficient food and water should be carried in order to cover an evacuation time of at least one week.

*Pre-landfall, people that are to evacuate due to hurricanes etc, can go to _____ website to check for boarding facilities in the area they are evacuating to.

2) North Carolina first used Co-located shelters during Hurricane Isabel in 2003. Co-located shelters are shelters that offer housing arrangements for humans and animals on the same facility grounds. (Co-located does not mean that the animals stay with their owners but that the animals are housed nearby in the same facility or its grounds. An example would be a school where humans are sheltered in the gym and animals would be sheltered in an adjacent field house/locker room. Co-located shelters may allow or require owners to participate in the care of their animals in these shelters according to shelter policy. If available, County or Regional Emergency Plans will designate co-located shelter sites or animal only shelter sites. Owners can find information about shelter locations by contacting their County Emergency Management Offices either before or during an event.

*Owners, if they choose to use a co-located shelter, should bring to the shelter a travel kennel or appropriate cage to house their animals while staying at the shelter. Other necessities for their pets include:

- collar with id tag, leash, food, and water for 7 days.
- documentation of rabies and other vaccinations
- medications and health records including microchip id

B) Guidelines for animals that are to be rescued from affected areas:

1) Owned or stray animals may need to be rescued from affected areas. These animals must be given the opportunity to be reunited with their owners. To facilitate reunification, individuals or groups performing rescue must comply with the following guidelines:

a. All individuals or groups intending to participate in rescue operations for animals must be credentialed by either NC SART, NCDA & CS, or the NC Division of Emergency Management. When an event occurs, credentialed rescue groups must check-in at either a County Emergency Operations Center or a Regional Branch Operations Center before participating in rescue activities. Rescue groups as a part of credentialing must sign a code of conduct stating that they must comply work within guidelines established by Command. Groups or individuals that do not will be asked to cease activities.

b. Any animal that is rescued must be registered at State approved registration sites before being removed from the affected areas. Registration sites will collect the appropriate information to help insure that owners have available means by which they can locate and claim their animal(s) ..

c. Location of Registration sites for rescued animals:

- * Registration sites may be located at ;
Co-located shelters, Animal Shelters, Vet Clinics, or other strategic locations/facilities
- *The sites' locations will be published pre-event if possible and throughout response and recovery phases of operations.

d. Information collection at Registration sites: (Rescued Animal Registration Form)

- * Name of animal owner, their address, and phone number if known
- * Location where animal was rescued (address, GPS coordinates or description of location)
- * Description of animal (species, breed, sex, color, weight, age, microchip id, and unique markings such as tags (rabies/other) brands, tattoos, ear tags/notches, scars, or color patterns as appropriate)
- * Name of individual and Agency/group performing rescue and phone number
- * Disposition of animal (name of shelter location, phone, address)

e. Once animals are registered, the animal(s) can be transported to the approved shelter site or another approved location. Other locations including destinations in other states may be approved by the State Veterinarian in some circumstances. A copy of the registration form will accompany the animal to the approved shelter.

C) Shelter Policy:

- 1) Designated Shelters for evacuated and rescued animals will be responsible for maintaining an information trail that includes the information collected at Registration, signature of receiving official, date of reception, as well as any information acquired (contact with possible owners, records of veterinary treatment, etc)
- 2) Animals at designated shelters will be micro chipped, vaccinated for rabies (as appropriate), and decontaminated if needed. Other vaccinations or treatments may be performed.
- 3) Designated Shelters will keep a log of animals released that includes:
 - receiver's name, address, phone, email address, and signature of receiving party
- 4) County shelters will operate under County ICS.
- 5) Regional shelters that serve multi-counties will operate under the Branch EOC ICS.
- 6) Animals that are deemed dangerous to other animals or shelter personnel either because of aggressiveness or disease may be euthanized by permission of County Animal Control according to County shelter policy or by permission of State Vet or his/her representative.

D) Fostering Policy

- 1) Animals rescued from an event will be held in designated shelters in or adjacent to the affected area for 30 days from the date of the incident to allow owners the opportunity to claim their animals. After the initial 30 day period, animals continue to be sheltered or relocated as directed by the State Vet or Incident Commander.
- 2) Animals rescued from an event will not be available for adoption to a new owner until a MINIMUM of 60 days from the day of the event. NOTE: The State Veterinarian may designate a longer time period if circumstances warrant in the attempt to allow owners reasonable opportunity to claim their animal.
- 3) Individuals or Groups agreeing to foster animals must complete the NC Fostering Agreement before removing any animal from Designated Shelters.
- 4) If animals are to be relocated to other states, health regulations must be followed unless the receiving State Vet agrees to waive such regulations.