North Carolina Veterinary Response Corps

THE VRC CONNECTION

Summer 2021

It's that time again, hurricane season! The Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1 through November 30. NOAA is predicting an above-average hurricane season. They are estimating 13 - 20 names storms, 6 - 10 hurricanes, and 3 - 5 major hurricanes. But as we all know, it only takes one to cause major impacts to our state.

https://www.noaa.gov/media-release/noaa-predicts-another-active-atlantic-hurricane-season

I encourage everyone to reach out to your county Emergency Manager and animal shelter or animal services director to get involved in planning for disaster pet sheltering. If you have experience handling livestock, wildlife, or exotic animals, let them know that as well. If we are activated to support a state-run shelter, like we were most recently in 2019 for Hurricane Dorian, or we receive requests from counties for assistance with animal response, we will be reaching out to you all for your help.

We have many new members which is wonderful! On page 7 are two charts; one to show how the NCDA&CS Emergency Programs Division is organized and the other to show how the regional field staff cover the state.

Visit the NCVRC website to learn more about deployment requirements and training opportunities.

If you have any particular topics that you would like to see featured in the newsletter, or you would like to write an article, please let me know!

Dr. Anna Allen

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https://www.ncagr.gov/oep/veterinary/VetCorps.htm

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & CONSUMER SERVICES

Emergency Programs Division

Steve Troxler, Commissioner ***John Howard, Director***

Animal Emergency Response Working Group

By Dr. Michelle Bouchey

Do you know if your county has a plan on how to handle a response involving animals, particularly livestock? Who would they contact if a tractor trailer hauling cattle overturned on a roadway in the county? Have they identified the necessary resources including trained personnel for a safe and effective response for both the humans and animals involved? If you are a veterinarian, are you trained in large animal technical rescue and would you be willing to assist your county or region in a large animal response? If yes, have you had discussions with the local agency that has legal authority (varies by county) so they know who to contact? How will you get paid for your time and resources and has that been established prior to an incident?

These questions and many others have prompted the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' (NCDA&CS) Emergency Programs Division to establish the Animal Emergency Response Working Group (AERWG). The AERWG is still in its infancy and had its first formal meeting (virtually of course) in December 2020. Currently, this working group includes numerous state and local government representatives along with several volunteer organizations to create a more coordinated planning and response effort for animals, especially livestock, in emergency situations.

The original premise was to address livestock and vehicular incidents, but it was quickly realized that preparedness activities such as trainings and resource identification could be utilized for any animal in a wide array of disaster situations. Some goals of the working group are to assist with awareness of animal-related incidents; resource identification; communication/notifications of incidents at the local, regional and state level; and to train response personnel and any interested parties starting at the county level.

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REGISTRATION

NC TERMS
https://terms.ncem.org

REQUIREMENTS FOR DEPLOYMENT

- ICS 100, 200, and 700
- Biosecurity/PPE Training
- Sheltering Training
- Knowledge of NC Emergency Management
- Knowledge of Emergency Support Functions
- Sign a Code of Conduct
- Registration in NC TERMS

Animal Emergency Response Working Group

By Dr. Michelle Bouchey

Priorities of this mission are responder and public safety; humane and timely assistance of animals in an emergency; establishing animal sheltering capabilities; ensuring appropriate trainings are available; and conducting public outreach. The areas of focus are in solidifying notification processes; scene arrival and assessment; containment and security of the scene; triage, extraction and relocation of animals; mortality management; humane depopulation, if deemed necessary; and debriefing.

If you would like more information concerning the AERWG, please contact Michelle Bouchey, DVM at michelle.bouchey@ncagr.gov or 989-330-0584.

We are currently in the process of creating the webpage so please continue to check back. The parent website (www.ncagr.gov/oep) has numerous resources and links already available for disaster preparedness and response and is available now.

Current list of contributors:

- NCDA&CS
  - Emergency Programs Division
  - Veterinary Division
  - Marketing Division
- NC Emergency Management
- NC Cattleman's Association
- Local Emergency Management
  - Winston-Salem/Forsyth County
  - New Hanover County
- NC Cooperative Extension
  - Avery/Mitchell Counties
  - Forsyth County
- Animal Services
  - Wake County
  - Charlotte-Mecklenburg PD Animal Care and Control
  - Granville County
- Piedmont Emergency Animal Response Team (PEART)
- 4Hooves Large Animal Services (4HLAS)

Hurricane Season Preparedness

The Atlantic Hurricane Season officially began on June 1 and lasts through November 30. Historically, the peak of the season is in September, but North Carolina has certainly seen storms as early as July and as late as October. In our mission to serve the state's animal and agriculture communities in times of disaster, NCDA&CS Emergency Programs Division stands ready to respond. As a reminder, "the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale is a 1 to 5 rating based on a hurricane's sustained wind speed. This scale estimates potential property damage. Hurricanes reaching Category 3 and higher are considered major hurricanes because of their potential for significant loss of life and damage. Category 1 and 2 storms are still dangerous, however, and require preventative measures" (https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/aboutsshws.php?). What has been emphasized in multiple hurricane preparedness presentations over the past few years is that almost of greater importance than the wind speed is the size and overall speed of the storm. Also, especially in NC, often the potential for flooding and water damage from a hurricane are greater risks than that of the wind. Even a tropical storm can cause major damage from flooding, especially if it is slow moving or there has already been rain in the days and weeks prior to the storm. Rip currents and storm surge are major threats to life in advance of and during a tropical storm or hurricane. Flooding brings a whole new set of response challenges including road closures, road and bridge destruction, erosion, contamination, and injuries and deaths from motor vehicle accidents caused by people driving into flood waters. The other point that has been emphasized is that no matter the hurricane season forecast that you may hear about on the news, how many named storms are predicted etc., it only takes one storm to cause devastating impacts that could affect the state for years after the storm.

Reminder - September is National Preparedness month. It marks an annual tradition to promote easy preparedness activities that everyone can take to ensure they are ready for disasters. It is especially important for us, as responders, to ensure that we are ourselves prepared as well as our homes and families. We can perform better in response if we know that our homes and families, to include our pets as well, are taken care of while we are away. Now is the time to update or prepare emergency plans and supplies and discuss these with your family.

Helpful links for preparedness and response can be found on the NCDA&CS Emergency Programs website (http://www.ncagr.gov/oep/preparedness.htm) as well as on the Department's disaster page (https://www.ncagr.gov/disaster/).

Radiological Emergency Preparedness

NCDA&CS Emergency Programs staff regularly participate in meetings, trainings, and exercises with local, state, and national partners to stay up-to-date on, and ready to respond to, radiological emergencies and disasters.

There are three nuclear plants in NC - the Brunswick Nuclear Plant in Southport, the Harris Nuclear Plant in New Hill, and the McGuire Nuclear Station in Huntersville. The Catawba Nuclear Station is just south of Charlotte in York, SC, so NC is within the 10-mile radius, also called the Exposure Pathway Zone (EPZ).

Each nuclear plant has a planning task force that meets on a monthly basis to discuss the status of ongoing preparedness activities (such as updating public messages and brochures, testing at the plant, construction and road closures along evacuation routes, testing of monitoring equipment, and distribution of KI tablets to name a few) as well as preparing for trainings and exercises.

There are two main types of radiological exercises that we do in NC. One is called an EPZ and one is called an IPZ. EPZ exercises are held more frequently than IPZ exercises. The EPZ exercises are focused on the partners and activities within a 10-mile radius from the plant. Protective action plans within this area are designed to avoid or reduce dose from potential exposures such as inhaling radioactive particles. These actions include sheltering, evacuation, and the use of potassium iodide pills where appropriate.[1] The IPZ exercises test the partners and activities that would need to happen within a 50-mile radius, or "Ingestion Pathway Zone." Agricultural and food safety impacts are an important focus of the IPZ exercises - so NCDA&CS plays a larger role in both training and response when we have these at one of the plants in the state. Protective action plans for this area are designed to avoid or reduce dose from eating or drinking radioactive materials.[1]

There are a wide variety of response activities that animal health professionals will be needed for in the event of a radiological disaster - from assisting with animal decontamination (companion and food production animals), caring for potentially exposed animals, assisting with environmental sampling teams on farms, and many others.

To learn more about nuclear preparedness in general, you can visit Duke Energy's website https://www.duke-energy.com/safety-and-preparedness/nuclear-safety.

To learn more about the potential impacts to farm animals and agriculture, you can read this document https://www.ncagr.gov/disaster/Emergency-Information-for-Farmers-Food-Processors.pdf.

1. https://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc/emerg-preparedness/about-emerg-preparedness/planning-zones.html

Important NCDA&CS Leadership Updates

We have a new State Veterinarian Dr. Mike Martin, who previously served as the Director of Poultry Programs; Dr. Doug Meckes is retiring after serving since 2014. This past April, Dr. Mike Neault, who served as the Livestock Director for the Veterinary Division, was promoted to State Veterinarian in South Carolina. The new Livestock Director is Dr. Catherine Harris. Christina Waggett, who most recently served as an Agricultural Programs Specialist and federal liaison for NCDA&CS, has been promoted to Assistant Commissioner of Consumer Protection; her predecessor, Joe Reardon retired June 30. The Emergency Programs Division falls under Consumer Protection along with Food and Drug Protection, Meat and Poultry Inspection, Standards, Structural Pest Control and Pesticides, and the Veterinary Division.

Training and Membership Updates

Student Training

In 2020, Veterinary Response Corps training was conducted for 3 Veterinary Technician Programs. Students at Cape Fear Community College and Central Carolina Community College received a 1-hour overview of animal and agriculture emergency preparedness and response as well as potential roles for Veterinary Response Corps members delivered via their virtual student learning platforms. Training materials were shared with Gaston Community College for students to review on their own time. We hope that they will continue completing requirements to become deployable NCVRC members. This course gives them the basic background and knowledge to be helpful in their communities during a disaster. Ideally we like to deliver the overview course and a course on biosecurity and sheltering to all students before they graduate.

Recorded training from 2019 was provided to 2nd-year DVM students at the NCSU College of Veterinary Medicine in 2020. Veterinary Credentialed Responder training has been a required part of the DVM curriculum since 2009.

We hope to be back in the classroom and on campuses this fall as the trainings are much more fun to do in-person!

Conferences

Dr. Allen and Dr. Bruce Akers recorded VRC training for the virtual 2020 NC Veterinary Conference and Dr. Allen delivered an overview of VRC, disaster response for animals, and pet sheltering online for the NC Association of Veterinary Technicians this spring.

Membership Update

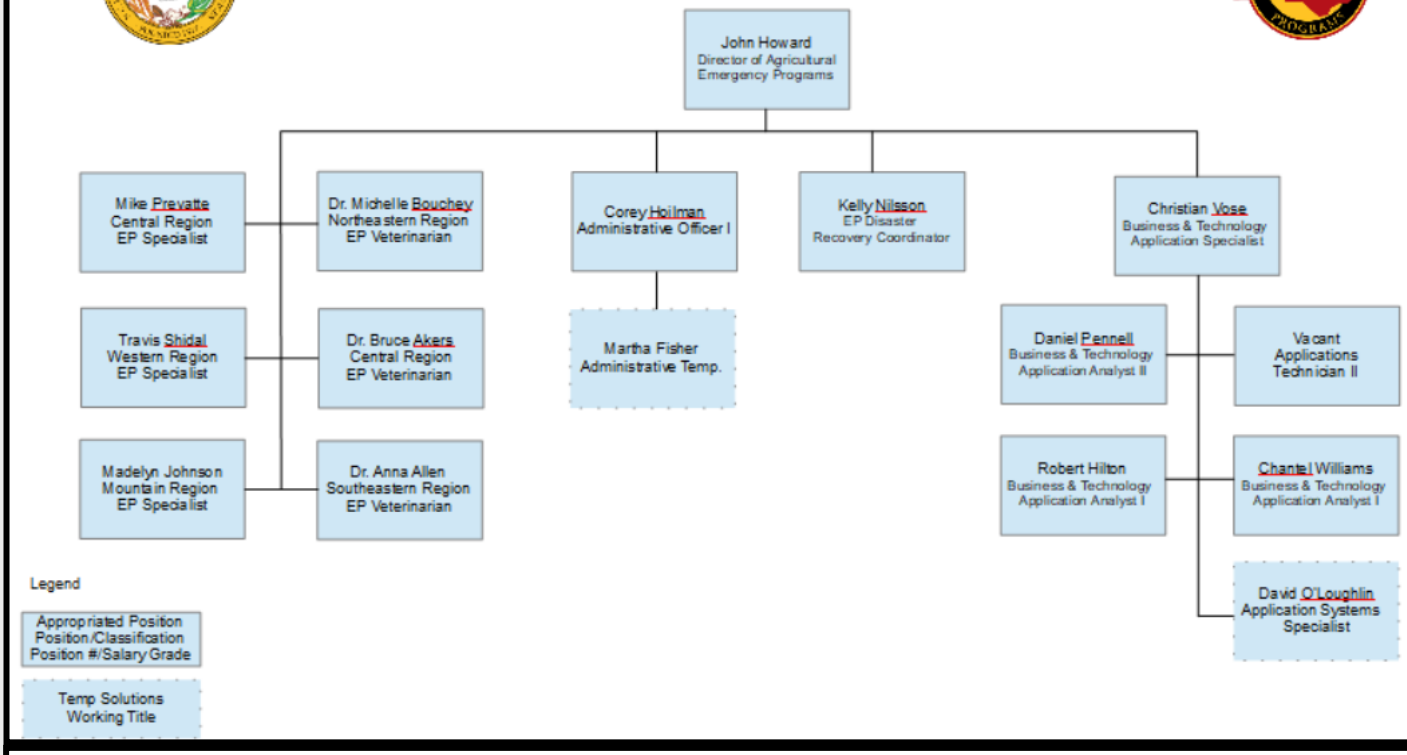
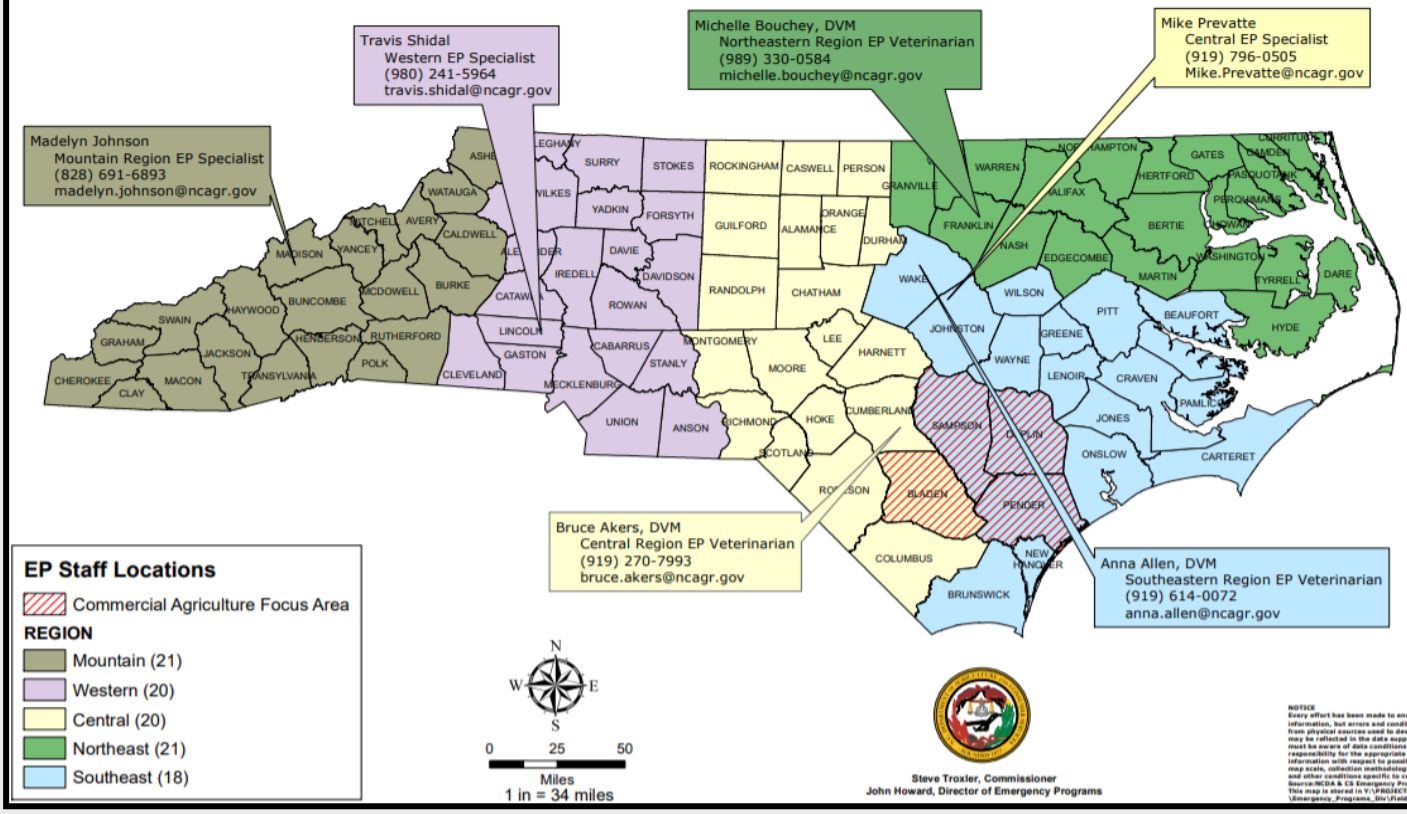
We are pleased to have **65** VRC members registered in NC TERMS. Please continue to share this opportunity with colleagues in the animal health sector and let's grow our numbers!

NCDA&CS Emergency Programs

Emergency Programs Division

Organization Chart

June 2021



North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
Emergency Programs Regions