

## **Animal Evacuation Plan**

During a major fire in the town of **Apple Valley, California** (54,000), in 1999, many residents found it difficult to bring their animals with them when they evacuated. The city decided to create an animal evacuation plan that would provide assistance in evacuating and sheltering domestic animals during emergencies.

### **Leadership/Staffing**

The plan was developed by the city's emergency preparedness manager and animal control supervisor, and was approved by the town council as an annex to the town's emergency operations plan. The group, Friends of Animals during Disasters, has 30 trained volunteers who can assist in evacuating and caring for animals during emergencies.

### **Timeline**

The first draft of the animal evacuation plan was completed in 2002 and was adopted by the city council a few months later. A second version of the plan was developed later.

### **Budget/funding**

The main costs associated with the plan are for the equipment and feed needed for evacuating and sheltering animals during an emergency. Area businesses have agreed to provide many of these resources at no charge during emergencies. And, depending on the nature of the emergency, the town may be able to have the remaining costs reimbursed by the federal or state government.

### **Program description**

About 20 percent of the town's residents own large animals or pets, and the plan focuses on helping those who are unable to evacuate their own animals. The first priority in the plan is to move the animals to places of safety and meet the animals' needs for food, water, shelter, and medical treatment. The plan also

covers disaster recovery, including foster care, reuniting animals with owners, long-term medical care, and disposal when needed.

In the event of an emergency, the city's emergency preparedness manager contacts all the trained volunteers and arranges for a volunteer staging area to be set up. All the volunteers are affiliated with an equestrian group and most have stock trailers that can be used to move large animals. Volunteers are registered disaster service workers trained by the town, and all have a photo ID card. Some volunteers help those who are unable to evacuate their animals; others set up a temporary shelter for animals with separate kennels for different types of animals, separate areas for sick or injured animals, and space for storing equipment.

Animal control staff make sure that all operations are going smoothly and that security is available for the animal shelter on a 24-hour basis. Each animal control truck has an emergency response box that includes a copy of the plan, as well as the forms and supplies needed to implement it. All owners must fill out forms for each animal placed in the shelter, and each animal is given a numbered tag to ensure that the animal is returned to its rightful owner at the end of the emergency. The animal control staff and volunteers then provide care and feeding for all of the animals in the shelter for as long as needed. Several veterinarians have volunteered to provide all needed medical care.

## **Results**

In 2003, a neighboring community was evacuated because of wildfires. Apple Valley was not threatened by the fire, and it sheltered 100 horses, llamas, ponies, sheep, and pigs for its neighbors for six days. Every animal was properly registered and tagged, and veterinary services were provided for several sick animals. The plan's registration process was used to notify the animals' owners that their animals needed treatment and to obtain permission for treatment. The San Bernardino sheriff's department provided on-site security, and volunteers helped register and care for the animals.

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