

EMERGENCY TIPS: HORSES

- Develop a disaster plan now. Locate temporary livestock facilities and plan several possible evacuation routes.
- Post the phone numbers of your local animal control services and County Office of Emergency Services on your barn.
- Keep all transporting equipment ready for use on a moment's notice. Be sure horses are well schooled in trailer and/or van loading.
- Work with your veterinarian to develop a first-aid kit with bandage material, scissors, flashlight, duct tape and pain medication.
- Keep a halter and lead rope available for every horse. If you must evacuate, secure the horse's name and your name, address and phone number in indelible ink on duct tape around the halter or horse's neck.
- Place photographs and written descriptions of your horse(s) in a safe place.
- Maintain your property—remove any dangerous debris that could entangle or injure animals.

EMERGENCY TIPS: PETS

- Identify out-of-area boarding kennels, veterinary clinics, family, friends or pet-friendly motels.
- Have appropriate pet carriers at hand, and familiarize your pet with a portable kennel.
- Use identification tags or microchips.
- Keep copies of vaccination records and current photographs in a waterproof container.
- Set aside food and water for seven days: about a gallon/day for a 40-pound dog and one quart/day per cat.
- Keep a kit with medications, gauze rolls for bandaging and making muzzles, towels and blankets, leashes, extra collars, litter box, bags and scoopers.

Last September, dozens of Veterinary Emergency Response Team volunteers assisted area ranchers, evacuating horses to safety and treating or euthanizing mortally injured animals after swift-moving wildfires burned more than 1,000 sheep in Yolo County pastures.

Local Wildfire Demonstrates Power of Disaster Planning and Response

It happened here. It could happen to you or your clients. Before dawn September 22, 2006, wildfires swept through 13,000 acres of Yolo County pastureland. Flames and smoke caught more than a thousand sheep.

The Veterinary Emergency Response Team, from its base at the Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital, mobilized immediately.

Fifty faculty members, staff members and students volunteered for weeks to treat animals, euthanize sheep, and care for ewes until their lambs were born in December. Team leaders and county officials arranged for disposal of hundreds of carcasses to prevent risk to public health.

Students have a big interest in contributing to crisis response in their communities.

The Veterinary Emergency Response Team, led by John Madigan, professor in the Department of Veterinary Medicine and Epidemiology, has established clear guidelines for animal rescue, transport and treatment. Team protocols come from the Standardized Emergency Management System used by government emergency and agricultural agencies.

Formal agreements between the team and local authorities allow agencies to call on the Veterinary Emergency Response Team during a declared disaster. The response team provides training on a volunteer basis.

“Students have a big interest in contributing to crisis response in their communities,” says Dr. Madigan. “If we can train them during veterinary school, our graduates will become a valuable resource for local communities throughout the state.”

As of October 2006, federal law requires states to help evacuate pets during a natural catastrophe or risk losing federal money.

A 2006 California law requires the Office of Emergency Services to incorporate animal emergency response into the existing management system for livestock. At press time, it was unclear exactly how the office would fund animal emergency response, especially for pet evacuation, yet the School of Veterinary Medicine community has demonstrated willingness and aptitude for the task.

Dr. Madigan says, “Yolo County can model how a disaster plan should work. The ability of the school to assist in an organized way during declared disasters has been proven in several events over the past 10 years.”

Many suggestions exist for packing an “animal disaster kit.” All are helpful, but for emergency responders, planning tops the list. Dr. Madigan says, “Developing, discussing and practicing a disaster plan will help prevent turning an initial disaster into a greater tragedy for animals.”



John Madigan