

Alternative Approaches to Developing Formal Emergency Operations Plans

Several alternative approaches have been used to develop EOPs:

- Issue-based plans
- Development of community plans as an extension of business continuity plans
- Establishment of a county veterinarian with the responsibility to manage all phases of emergency management

Issue-Based Plans

Issue-based plans address the likely logistical issues, such as sheltering of pets and their owners, adoption of stray animals, and mass transport of livestock. This is different from conventional hazard-based plans, which are the type commonly developed by EMAs. Many of the issue-based plans originate in disaster relief organizations, such as the ARC and animal care groups. Disaster relief organizations that are already established in a community are in a unique position to help the large segment of the population that owns animals because they are often the first point of contact for disaster victims.

The goals of disaster relief organizations are to facilitate recovery and to empower the victims in disasters. These goals should be adapted to the care of animal owners, who are a population with special needs. Therefore the development of a program that addresses the needs of animal owners in disasters is consistent with the overall mission of most disaster relief organizations. It should be emphasized, however, that disaster relief organizations that take care of people can address only the care of animals that remain under the supervision of their owners at all times. Only organizations that have a legal authority to deal with stray animals should handle the care of animals that do not have identified owners.

Community referral service

Most human disaster relief organizations do not have the expertise or capability to deal with animals directly. Therefore they should not indulge in dealing with stray animals, but rather they should have a clear definition of and procedures for identifying stray animals that more appropriate groups can manage.

Plans for animal owners can be developed more or less entirely within existing disaster relief organizations. The best approach is to develop a referral service that can direct animal owners to existing community resources during disasters. The centerpiece of such a community referral service is a network of volunteer persons and businesses that are willing and able to help animal-owning disaster victims. This can be implemented through coordination and cooperation of representatives from the various animal care industries and the disaster relief organizations. The referral service can identify potential disaster victims and assess their likely needs (e.g., housing, feeding, and veterinary care). All the provisions to meet these needs are available in almost every community. The role of disaster relief organizations is to manage the resources by drawing these together.

Issue-based plans of course have to comply with any public health and liability guidelines and policies. To meet these conditions, a committee that develops and maintains a community referral plan should be established.

Committee operations should be guided by a steering committee consisting of a veterinarian and representatives of the lead disaster relief organization, a local humane society (or animal

control department), and the health department. The steering committee is responsible for calling meetings, setting meeting agendas, contacting community resources and requesting their participation, providing public relations, coordinating overall plan development, raising funds, and conducting a full-scale exercise of the plan.

Subcommittees should consist of all regular steering committee members plus representatives from the animal care industry who can help with the following issues:

- Identification of susceptible animal-owning populations in the community
- Compilation of a list of potential needs for each owner's animal type
- Development of a list of resources in the community where these needs can be met

As the plan develops, subcommittees may handle additional tasks:

- Development of educational materials
- Participation in exercises and actual incidents
- Promotion of the services of the local disaster relief organization through this program

County Veterinarian

Another approach to developing plans is the establishment of a county veterinarian. This person is appointed by the county commissioners and is responsible for all phases of emergency management.

Extending Business Continuity Plans

Developing community plans incrementally from business resumption plans is addressed in Section III, the business section. This type of plan development first addresses concerns of individual businesses and then expands the program into the community.