

## Ensuring an Official Commitment

Development of disaster preparedness plans should start with the appropriate level of authority. The appropriate authorities are summarized in Table 20-1. Communities with an EOP should first determine to what extent the care of animals and their owners is addressed. If the EOP does not have an animal care annex, an official commitment to develop one should be made before a committee embarks on the lengthy process of doing so. This can be accomplished only by inclusion of the appropriate authorities. Only once there is a formal commitment by these persons should the development proceed.

**Table 20-1** Positions that can grant official commitment to developing an animal care annex

Level	Position
State	Director of emergency management, state veterinarian, state director of department of agriculture, state public health veterinarian, presidents of responder groups
County or municipality	Director of emergency management, director of animal control (for plans that address stray animals), veterinarian, director of a humane shelter, county veterinarian

Elected and appointed officials in a community often need particular types of information to justify their actions. Typically they are interested in the number of constituents that may be affected and the economic impact that animal-related disasters may have on the community. Elected and appointed officials are likely to be interested in animal welfare only as a secondary issue. Estimates of the public (constituent) health and economic impact of disasters on animal-related industries are provided in Table 20-2.

**Table 20-2** Estimates of the number of constituents who own animals in the United States and the economic impact of animal ownership on a community

Emergency Management System objective	Animal-related issue	Population affected
Saving of lives	Failure of animal owners to evacuate	5%-10%
Incident stabilization	Unauthorized rescue attempts	10%-15%
Property conservation	Minimization of damage to animal care industries	Livestock \$350* Pets \$115* Horses \$100*

\*Figures reflect the value of the industry per U.S. citizen per year.

If the persons with the authority to develop EOPs do not agree to support such a plan, their decision should be confirmed in writing. This can prevent later misunderstandings about who was responsible for being unprepared. It is unlikely that officials will deny the development and

implementation of an animal care annex once they are made aware of the size of the animal-owning constituency and its economic impact on a community.