

Mitigation against Fires

Of greatest importance to veterinary emergency management are fires that occur in buildings and wild-land. The highest number of deaths in people occurs in single-family residences and duplexes. Therefore, to improve safety for pets and their owners, fire safety in the home should be practiced.

Statistics on fire deaths and injuries to humans in structural fires are likely to be directly applicable to animals (pets), which share the same environment as humans. Wildfires present different problems to animals than to people because a disproportionately larger number of animals (horses, livestock, wildlife) than persons are typically found in wild-land fire areas. However, preventive measures developed for the safety of humans and buildings again are directly applicable to the protection of animals against fires. This includes regular fire drills as an integral part of a safety program, which should be practiced at least yearly in every veterinary practice, animal shelter, pet shop, and horse stable and be reviewed on every farm.

The greatest safety measures against fires come with improvements in building construction. Modern residential buildings are built under the assumption that occupants would not be able to evacuate without some assistance. These buildings have firebreaks (fire doors and walls) and fire suppression devices such as fire-retardant exterior and roofing materials and sprinkler systems. Additional safety features include fire alarms, smoke detectors, and fire extinguishers.