

New England ADPAC News

Fall/Winter 2002

MEMA Targets State for Animal Training

With the impending completion of a state-wide animal disaster plan for Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and the Massachusetts Emergency Animal Rescue Team (MEART) have made the commitment to bring the topic of "animals in disasters" to every region in the state with targeted training.

The first day-long conference on the topic, conducted on Cape Cod this past September, was a huge success. Among the attendees were over 100 representatives from local and state emergency management agencies, veterinary offices, zoos, animal care and control agencies, police, fire, and health departments, municipal agencies and the American Red Cross.

Topics ranged from how to write a disaster plan for your pets and your animal facility, to creating a community disaster plan for animals, to the public health implications of animals in disasters.



Speakers included HSUS Regional Director Joanne Bourbeau, ARL of Boston Director of Operations Ed Powers, MEMA Planning Director Mike Philbrick, and Massachusetts State Veterinarian Dr. Lorraine O'Connor.

Protecting animals in the face of disaster is of particular interest to animal lovers on Cape Cod, a very vulnerable area for natural disasters and an even greater challenge for evacuation. Attendees went home with a greater knowledge about the issues that come up involving animals when disaster strikes, and "armed" with enough information to get them started on writing disaster plans for their own pets as well as for animals in their own organizations and communities.

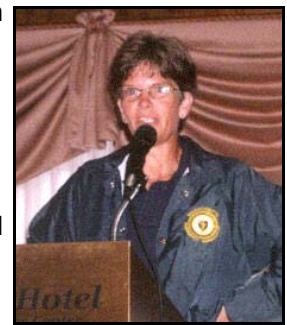
"We greatly appreciated the cooperation of MEMA and The HSUS to produce such a wonderful event," said Kim Amaral, Cape Cod Animal Disaster Coordinator. "The breadth of the seminar was evident in the number of attendees . . . we were filled to the brim, with many more interested in something similar next year!"

"It's very exciting to see so much enthusiasm for this topic in Massa-

chusetts," said Bourbeau. "MEMA's obvious commitment to this topic has also been tremendous."

In addition to the Cape Cod conference, animals were the topic of discussion at a day-long workshop in Northhampton in October and at a presentation during the Northeast Regional Emergency Management Conference held in Worcester in November. MEMA has committed to sponsoring four more "Animals in Disasters" day-long workshops in 2003 throughout the state!

You can check MEMA's website for more information about the dates and locations for the 2003 "Animals in Disasters" conferences at www.mass.gov/mema, or contact the HSUS New England Regional Office at 802-368-2790 or e-mail jboubeau@hsus.org.



MEMA Program Manager Barbara Legatowicz welcomes conference attendees.

The New England Animal Disaster Planning Advisory Committee (ADPAC)
is an adhoc group of individuals and organizations interested in promoting
the effective development and implementation of disaster plans to protect animals.

Local DART Team Partners with American Red Cross

Pet owners lined up at the American Red Cross (ARC) emergency shelter with their dogs, cats, snakes, birds, rabbits, mice, and more. Residents had been evacuated quickly from the Rutland, Vermont area following a widespread flood, and many had escaped with nothing more than their children and pets under their arms. Luckily, even though the ARC does not allow pets in their shelters, they had made prior arrangements with their local disaster animal response team to relocate and care for any displaced pets at a nearby site.

This was the scenario played out at a recent mock evacuation drill sponsored by the Central Vermont/New Hampshire Valley Chapter of the ARC. What was unique about this disaster drill was the participation of the Rutland Area Disaster Animal Response Team (RADART). The collaboration between the responders to both humans and animals afforded both the opportunity to not only practice their own disaster plans but to understand each other's roles a little better.



Volunteers review proper animal intake procedures.

RADART volunteers set up their emergency animal shelter at the local senior community center, and were included in every aspect of the drill. Red Cross volunteers acted as human victims, many of whom arrived at the evacuation shelter with their "pets"--acted out by stuffed animals! A variety of animal



A "patient" is transported to the local vet hospital.

scenarios unfolded throughout the day, including a call from the emergency operations center for assistance with some stray animals and the unplanned arrival of pet owners at an alternate shelter with no provisions for housing pets.

Back at the emergency animal shelter, areas had been set up for animal intake, triage, animal housing, and animal exercise. Volunteers were assigned various duties under the incident command system, and played out their roles just like they were handling live animals. Every "animal" went through the intake process, was seen by a veterinarian, and was attended to during its stay.

"I was asked to both participate in and critique the drill," explained HSUS New England Regional Director Joanne Bourbeau. "I was very impressed with how well-organized the animal responders were. They calmly handled every curve ball, and used the problems that arose as learning experiences for the future."

Another Close Call for New England Animal Shelter



A disaster threatened yet another New England animal shelter this past July, when a fire that started in the mechanical room of the Massachusetts SPCA's Boston shelter forced the evacuation of almost 400 employees and 130 animals. The Boston MSPCA also houses the Angell Memorial Animal Hospital, and the fire compromised the staff, animals and operations at both facilities. Dozens of animals had been scheduled for

surgery that morning, and the shelter was subsequently closed for seven weeks because of the fire and smoke damage.

MSPCA president Gus Thornton thanked the Boston Fire Department for their "prompt and effective response". "Thanks to their efforts," said Thornton, "no

one was injured. There's no question that the fire fighters saved lives and prevented further damage by stopping the fire as quickly as they did."

MSPCA employees also risked their own lives to save animals. Following the instructions of fire fighters, employees formed a relay line to carry more than 100 animals out of the burning building to safety.

"It was a chaotic situation, to say the least," said MSPCA Vice President Carter Luke. "But good communication and being under control amidst the chaos was the key to getting both animals and humans out safely and quickly."

To learn how you can prepare *your* animal facility for disaster, and obtain a free copy of the HSUS's guide on "Disaster Planning for Animal Facilities", contact Joanne Bourbeau at 802-368-2790 or e-mail jboubeau@hsus.org.

Vermont Passes "Good Samaritan" Law

People who assist animals following a disaster have added protection in Vermont with the recent passage of the state's "Good Samaritan" law. Spearheaded by the Vermont Animal Disaster Emergency Planning Team (ADEPT), the law states that anyone "who in good faith provides care and treatment to an animal during an emergency shall not be held liable for civil damages by the owner of the animal . . ." Emergencies are defined to include fires, floods, natural disasters, hazardous chemical incidents, vehicular collisions with animals and transportation accidents where an animal is injured or in need of assistance to protect its health or life.

"This law is a protective measure for people who want to help animals in the face of disaster but are concerned that they will be held liable for further injury or death to someone's pet," said HSUS director Joanne Bourbeau. "There are always certain risks involved with rescuing animals, but we don't want this to be a deterrent to people who simply just want to help. This added protection will help us recruit volunteers to respond if we need to activate our state disaster plan for animals."

For more information about Vermont's law and other existing Good Samaritan laws for pets, contact the HSUS New England Regional Office at 802-368-2790 or e-mail jbourbeau@hsus.org.

Dart Training Being Developed

Stay tuned for more details about the "Disaster Animal Response Team" (DART) training currently being developed by The HSUS.

The HSUS is creating this unique training opportunity specifically for animal disaster responders. Conducted over the course of three days, the training will include sections on damage assessment, the incident command system, the legal aspects of animals in disasters, communications, animal handling, setting up an emergency animal shelter, safety, and stress management. It will culminate in a 4-hour mock scenario, which will give students a first-hand look at the nature of a real disaster event.

After completion of the DART training, graduates will have a better understanding of a variety of animal issues in disasters, and a sound basis for more advanced disaster training, which will be offered by The HSUS. DART graduates will have also had the training necessary to perform jobs like animal issue damage assessment, evacuation and transport, donations management, logistics, administration and finance, and sheltering. DART graduates may become a key element in The HSUS's damage/needs assessment network.

If you would like more information about upcoming DART trainings in New England and beyond, contact Joanne Bourbeau at 802-368-2790 or jbourbeau@hsus.org.

Disaster News Tidbits

Earthquake Rocks New England: The magnitude 5.1 earthquake that struck the Northeast on April 20, 2002 was a wake-up call for those who think that New England is safe from this natural disaster.

Felt from Pennsylvania to Maine, it was followed in the next 26 hours by a series of at least five aftershocks ranging in magnitude from 1.7 to 4.0. The epicenter was 15 miles south of Plattsburgh, New York. "It's really a question of when, rather than if," said Gregg Champlin, Natural Hazards Officer for the New Hampshire Office of Emergency Management (NHOEM). Champlin noted that all of New England is a moderate earthquake risk area and a serious quake could occur at any time.

(source: NHOEM, *The Emergency Manager*, Vol. 9, No. 3)

Donate \$25 and Receive a Midland

Weather Radio: The Northeast States Emergency Consortium (NESEC) is giving Midland Weather Radios (model 74-105X1) to anyone who donates \$25 to the non-profit organization. The Weather Radio will accurately inform you of the official forecast and immediately alert you of an emergency condition. The radio features 7 weather channels, AM/FM radio, automatic alert with 90 db siren, instant weather reports, and battery back-up for power outages. Please make checks payable to NESEC and send to Northeast States Emergency Consortium, 419 Main St., Suite 5, Wakefield, MA 01880.

(source: NESEC News, Fall 2002).

World Disaster Report Focuses on

Reducing Risk: Last year alone, the lives of 170 million people worldwide were disrupted by disasters. Does development expose more people to disasters? What is the cost of failing to prepare? The 2002 World Disaster Report argues that risk reduction is an essential condition for sustainable development, and examines preparedness and mitigation initiatives from disaster-prone countries across the globe. The report can be accessed on-line at www.ifrc.org/publicat/wdr2002/. (source: ifrc web site)

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2nd Annual "National Conference on Animals in Disasters" a Success

The second annual "National Conference on Animals in Disasters" proved as successful as the first, with more than 200 people attending from thirty-six states.

Sponsored by The HSUS this past May in Dallas, Texas, registered participants included animal control, humane, and veterinary organizations, as well as disaster organizations and state and federal government emergency managers.

The most frequent comment from attendees was that the seminars provided people with the information, networking, and enthusiasm they needed to promote planning efforts in their own communities.

For many attendees, the highlight of the conference was the final day's mock disaster drill. Conference



HSUS Regional Director Joanne Bourbeau questions drill participants about the status of a "stray" dog.

planners "commandeered" a section of the street outside the conference hotel to stage a major disaster involving displaced animals.

Local volunteers brought along their own pets to play "victims" of the natural disaster. Live animals afforded participants the chance to test their animal-handling and problem-solving skills first-hand.

"The teams did a fantastic job," commented HSUS Regional Director Joanne Bourbeau, "I acted out every difficult scenario I could think of from my own experience responding after the Red River floods in Minnesota in 1997, and they kept up with me every step of the way!"

"Disasters are very emotionally charged," continued Bourbeau, "I really think participants gained much-needed confidence in their own abilities to help animals in a disaster after having had the chance to "practice" what they learned at the conference."