



NCR/UASI Animals in Disaster Temporary Animal Sheltering Field Guide

Colorado NCR/UASI Animal Emergency Committee

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Introduction

All emergencies are local and therefore the local agency always has the option and latitude to respond to an emergency involving animals in the way and method that best suits the entity involved.

This document is meant only to provide some quick guidelines and suggestions to local animal control agencies or others who are designated to take responsibility for animal issues during an emergency or disaster by identifying key points and critical issues that will be useful to the first responder and his/her agency during the initial stages of an emergency.

Flexibility and adaptation are critical during emergency situations. If the field guide or existing policy and procedure does not make sense for the situation, do what works. If you don't have the ideal supplies and equipment, adapt to what you do have available. Sometimes it is a matter of doing the best that you can with what you have available.

Anticipate chaos. In the early stages of an event, high energy, high volume, and high stress will create frustration, frayed nerves, and short tempers. Chaos is part of the response and in no way indicates failure or sub-standard performance. If there wasn't chaos, it would not be an emergency.

Activation

In consultation with the chain of command, animal control staff should begin the process of setting up a temporary shelter whenever they know that evacuation orders have been given.

- If evacuation orders are contemplated, put the emergency sheltering team on stand-by.
- If evacuation orders have been given, find out what location has been designated for the Red Cross shelter.
- Call the emergency sheltering team leader (also known as the Temporary Animal Shelter Manager) and advise on the location/address where they should respond and begin to set up the temporary animal shelter.
- If a veterinary medical component is not a part of the emergency sheltering team, contact a veterinary service provider (either paid or volunteer depending on your local animal emergency response plan) to send a veterinarian and a veterinary technician to the temporary shelter – **OR** contact the Colorado Veterinary Medical Reserve Corp (CO VMRC) via the Animal Emergency Management Programs (AEMP) of the Colorado Veterinary Medical Foundation (CVMF).
- Appoint a staff member to serve in the Sheltering Group Supervisor role and send that person to the site to serve as a liaison between Red Cross, the emergency sheltering team, and the facility manager/owner.
- Select a room or building near the human shelter location that is far enough away to avoid issues of noise, contamination, smells, and allergies.
- Confirm the availability of adequate lighting, ingress/egress through all doorways, fire extinguishers, functioning water and power, functioning restrooms, non-carpeted floors or floors that can be covered with a barrier, and operational ventilation.
- If the emergency sheltering team needs access to the local equipment cache (cages, food bowls, cleaning supplies, etc.), make arrangements to have the cache trailer delivered to the shelter location.
- If a law enforcement officer has not yet been assigned to the Red Cross shelter, the Sheltering Group Supervisor should stay at the facility to provide security until law enforcement personnel arrive or until other security measures have been put in place.
- The Sheltering Group Supervisor will establish a communication plan for use between the Temporary Animal Shelter Manager, the Sheltering Group Supervisor and the animal control dispatch center (exchange phone numbers, radio frequencies, etc.).
- Emergency animal sheltering team members will wear their designated identifying uniform and will wear their group ID badge. Their vehicles should be identified with a magnetic logo door placard or a dashboard placard.

Basic Animal Care

- Provide a cage or kennel that is large enough so that the animal can stand up and turn around comfortably.
- Post feeding times, cleaning times, visitation times, and kennel cleaning instructions on large poster board.
- Post cleaning instructions:
 - Wear gloves and other protective gear as necessary
 - Dog Kennels: remove animal on a leash, remove and dispose of solid waste, bedding materials, disposable trays, and water dish
 - Soak up moisture with paper towels, spray or wipe down with cleaning solution (as recommended by on-site vet).* Rinse with clear water if necessary, dry with paper towels
 - Add fresh bedding material, return dog to kennel, provide a clean, ½ full water dish
 - Change gloves between kennels
 - Spot clean throughout the day to remove solid waste and soak up urine or spilled food/water
 - Cat Kennels: only remove the cat if escape can be prevented (move to a closed room, transferred to a holding/cage or carrier, etc). Remove litter tray, bedding materials, disposable trays, water dish
 - Soak up moisture with paper towels, spray or wipe down with cleaning solution (as recommended by on-site vet).* Rinse with clear water if necessary, dry with paper towels
 - Add fresh bedding material, fresh litter tray, return cat to cage if applicable, provide a clean, ½ full water dish
 - Change gloves between kennels
 - Spot clean throughout the day to remove solid waste and soak up urine or spilled food/water
 - Double bag and frequently dispose of trash/waste
- Provide fresh water at all times in a sturdy (tip resistant) washable (disinfectable) bowls. Refresh and refill (keep ½ full to avoid high-volume spills) water dishes throughout the day as needed.
- Use high-quality dry kibble and canned food provided to pets in disposable containers two times per day in smaller amounts than would be normal per package instructions and/or follow veterinary instructions for feeding type and amount.
- Provide disposable litter trays with minimal litter for cat cages.
- The Temporary Animal Shelter Manager (TASM) should conduct a daily animal census to make sure that all animals are accounted for. This census should be noted on the daily supervisor's log.
- Twice per day the veterinarian and/or vet tech should walk the kennel area, visually evaluate the animal for any medical or behavioral concerns and administer any prescribed medications. Concerns and medicine administration should be noted on the cage card. If an animal is ill or otherwise no longer suitable for the

temporary sheltering situation, the TASM will be notified and arrangements will be made to have animal control move the animal to a more appropriate location.

- Dogs should be walked at least once per day. If the owner is not available or not able to provide some daily exercise, shelter staff will need to get the animal out to move and get fresh air. All activity should be noted on the impound form or card with the date/time and shelter staff member name.

*The veterinarian on site will establish the cleaning/sanitation protocol:

Diluted bleach solution – 4-8 oz of bleach per gallon of cold tap water

Diluted detergent solution – 5-8 drops of liquid detergent per 32 oz spray bottle

Chemical Disinfectant.....

Catastrophic Events

- If an emergency event is large enough, severe enough, or long lasting to the point that it fundamentally prohibits the day to day functioning of a community, your temporary animal shelter may look a lot different than the scenario described in this guide book. During a catastrophic event like a hurricane, earthquake, or some manmade event the shelter is likely to have to address stray animals of any type, wildlife, injured or sick animals, exotic pets, extended stays over many days or weeks, foster care, decontamination, euthanasia or maybe even care and support of people.
- In addition to the regular intake process, stray animals without identification should be vet checked, vaccinated per the on-scene veterinary recommendation, microchipped and kenneled in an area separate from owned animals. If animals that are sick or injured can not be moved to a more appropriate location, they should be kenneled in an isolation area and provided the level of veterinary care that is possible with the given staff, supplies, and medications that are on hand. If the intake volume is high, set up a triage procedure so that the most severe cases are treated first. If staffing allows, create a triage team with one veterinarian and one vet tech, and put together as many 3-person treatment teams that you can – one veterinarian, one vet tech, and one animal handler.
- If a system is available, lost or stray intakes should be photographed and reports/pictures posted on a web-based lost and found network.
- If an animal is sick or injured to the point of undue suffering and alternate facilities are not available for advanced treatment, the attending veterinarian may make the decision to perform humane euthanasia. If euthanasia is the recommended course of action, the diagnosis/prognosis should be clearly articulated on the impound paperwork and the veterinarian should record the date and time and sign the form. Deceased animals should be double-bagged, tagged with the animal ID number for reference, and stored at an appropriate location – to be determined by the chain of command depending on the particular circumstances and facility availability.
- Wildlife handling should be avoided as much as possible due to zoonotic disease concerns and the risk of bite and scratch injuries. If the animals can not be transported to a more appropriate location for treatment or turned over to the Division of Wildlife, euthanasia is recommended.
- Exotic animals should be kenneled in a separate area if possible and in an area where temperature control is somewhat possible. Arrangement should be made at the earliest possible time to move them to a more appropriate location. If moving the animals is not an option, shelter and veterinary staff will provide the best care possible with the staff, supplies, and expertise available.
- In the event that the temporary shelter has to be set up outdoors, the emergency sheltering team will use the tarps, canopies, and plastic sheeting available in the cache trailer to provide cover until such time as a tent, generator, water, latrines, etc. can be requested via the chain of command.
- If the temporary shelter will need to be in operation more than one week, consideration will be given to utilizing licensed rescue organizations with foster home capacity or the regular animal shelter if space and adequate staffing is available.
- For extended operation, the emergency sheltering team will likely have to reach out to other sheltering teams in the NCR/UASI area and/or the Animal Emergency Management Program area for shift relief resources.

Co-sheltering

- When human shelters are opened that allow people to stay together with their pets, the owners are then responsible for all aspects of pet care. Animal emergency response personnel will provide support as needed with delivery of supplies or transportation if people are unable to obtain items or move pets to other facilities if necessary.

Decontamination

- In the event that evacuated animals have been exposed to chemical, biological, or radiological contaminants, the decontamination process will most likely take place at the staging area and most likely occur in conjunction with human decontamination. This process will be supervised and facilitated by subject matter experts including hazmat professionals, physicians, veterinarians, and public health professionals. Animal emergency responders will work in a support capacity as directed by the experts.
- Previously contaminated animals will only be handled at the emergency shelter (or regular animal shelter) once they have been deemed safe. If a decontamination process is to be done in conjunction with the emergency shelter or at the regular shelter, it will only be initiated under the direct supervision of subject matter experts and only with the proper support, expertise, and personal protective equipment that is necessary to protect the health and safety of the animal emergency workers.

De-mobilization

- Clean, disinfect, and dismantle cages and kennels. Gather, sort, and stack all supplies.
- Inventory supplies and donations.
- Pack the cache trailer with supplies.
- De-brief the staff, have staff members sign out, and schedule an after-action review and meeting.
- The Temporary Animal Shelter Manager (TASM) and team leaders will complete supply/donation reconciliation and prepare a list of donations to be distributed and supplies to purchase to re-stock the sheltering cache.
- The TASM will calculate staff hours from sign-in/sign-out sheets.
- All paperwork will be turned over to the Animal Sheltering Group Supervisor (ASGS). The ASGS will arrange for excess donations to be picked up and for the shelter cache trailer to be picked up and returned to the designated location.
- The ASGS will assure that the proper agency is notified and provided with a list of items that are needed to re-stock the sheltering cache with what is needed to fulfill the established inventory.

Discharge

- When evacuation orders have been lifted and people are leaving the Red Cross Shelter to return home, the discharge process should be completed quickly and efficiently.
- The animal owner should produce a copy of the impound form, the ID index card (for operations where multi-copy impound forms or copy machines are not available), or other personal ID that satisfies shelter staff that the person is the animal owner.
- Staff members should retrieve the animal and any medications, toys, leashes/collars, etc. for the person and the animal owner should sign the original impound form indicating the date and time the animal was removed from the temporary shelter.
- Shelter staff should begin cleaning, disinfecting, and dismantling cages as soon as the discharge process begins so that by the time the animals are gone, much of the take-down work has already been completed.
- Cages and supplies should be neatly stacked with similar items for the final inventory. Items should be arranged in a way that allows quick and efficient access for the inventory count.
- Unclaimed animals should be transported by animal control to the regular animal shelter and should be held according to the local ordinances or state statutes addressing animal holding periods during times of emergency or disaster. Reasonable attempts should be made to contact an owner before final disposition of the animal is determined.

Donation Management

- Depending on the size of the temporary sheltering operation and number of staff member available, the Temporary Animal Shelter Manager (TASM) should assign a donations manager or assign the responsibility of donations management to the intake staff.
- A simple donations log should be used that records the date/time, the item and amount, the name, address, and contact number (if provided) of the donor, and the name of the shelter staff member to received the donation. A space on the log should be reserved to record a transfer in the event that donations are moved from the shelter location. Acknowledgement and receipts for donations will be prepared and sent after the operation.
- A separate area in the shelter should be set aside to store donations. If donations are of such a volume or type that storage is not practical, the TASM will notify the Animal Sheltering Group Supervisor who, via the chain of command, will arrange to have items picked up and moved (which will be noted on the donation log).
- A final inventory of donations should be conducted during de-mobilization. This inventory will be added to the supply inventory and the purchase/order list to determine what items and in what amounts supplies were expended, what supplies can be replenished through donations, and what items need to be purchased to restock the emergency shelter cache.
- The disposition of left-over donations will be decided via the chain of command.

Health Concerns

- Veterinary staff and shelter staff should monitor animals for any signs of illness or disease and should notify the Temporary Animal Shelter Manager (TASM) immediately if something amiss is discovered. Of particular concern are zoonotic diseases that can be transmitted between animals and people and infectious diseases that can be spread quickly between animals in the shelter.
- Gloves should be worn at all times when cleaning. Masks should be available for staff members who wish to use them.
- If anyone is bitten, animal control must be called to complete a bite report and institute a quarantine. In most situations, a bite animal will have to be moved to a more suitable location where separation from people and other animals can be maintained.
- The TASM must be notified immediately if any shelter staff is injured. An incident report should be completed, the Animal Sheltering Group Supervisor should be contacted and medical treatment or first aid should be initiated if applicable.

Intake

- Post large signs to direct pet owners to form orderly lines.
- Assign a “greeter” to help direct people and answer questions.
- Provide clipboards with intake (impound) forms for people to fill out while they are waiting in line.
- Capture identifying information on the owner, i.e. driver’s license or other photo ID, address, and contact information to help facilitate emergency contact and verify owner identity for discharge.
- Impound forms should be 2-part NCR or a copy machine or scanner should be available so that animal owners can be given a copy. If 2-part forms or copy machines are not available, the owner should be given an index card with the ID number, date, time, and staff member initials.
- If possible, provide chairs and customer service numbers so people are served on a first come, first serve basis.
- Intake personnel will confirm that paperwork is complete, will assign a unique ID number to the animal and will affix a paper collar with that ID number written in permanent marker, the date, breed, color, and name of the pet. A photo will be taken if possible and will include the animal owner and the paper collar with ID number visible.
 - If a computer generated ID numbering system is not available, a list of ID numbers should be written up using the month and day followed by a dash and then sequential numbers. For example, the first animal impounded on March 5th would be 35-1. The numbers on the sheet should be crossed out as they are used to avoid duplication of use.
- The animal will receive a brief veterinary evaluation and will be scanned for a microchip. The veterinarian will determine if the animal is a suitable candidate for the rigors of a temporary shelter. The on-site veterinarian will also determine if vaccinations of any type are warranted, and if so, will administer those vaccines. The vet or vet tech will make observation and/or treatment notes on the animal intake (impound) form.
- Once the initial intake is complete, it is not necessary to have a veterinarian on site at all times – a daily walk-thru to visually check the animals is sufficient. A veterinary technician, working under the supervision of veterinarian, should be on site at all times – including the over night shift.
- If an animal is taking/receiving maintenance medications, the vet will note this on the impound form with instructions for administering the medications. Medications will be placed in zip lock bag and will be zip-tied to the kennel or cage. The animal ID number will be written on the bag and on the medication package.
- A copy of the impound form and a cage card or follow up sheet will be marked with the animal’s ID number, placed in either a Ziploc bag or heavy duty sheet protector and zip-tied or hooked to the kennel.
- Animals should be kept in like groups (cats, small dogs, large dogs, etc.) and situated in such a way to reduce stress and anxiety. As time goes on, rearrangement may be necessary to keep animals as comfortable as possible.
- Leashes, toys, etc. that are left with the animal by the owner will be placed in a zip lock bag and will be zip-tied to the kennel or cage. The animal’s ID number will be written on the bag.
- Sick or aggressive animals, or animals that are otherwise not suited for the temporary shelter, will not be housed at the temporary facility. Owners will be advised to take the animal to the regular shelter, a veterinary clinic, arrange for private boarding, or if the owner is unable to make these arrangements, animal control officers will transport these animals to an appropriate location.

Shelter in Place

- If people and their pets are requested or ordered to shelter in place in response to an emergency situation, animal emergency response personnel will provide support as needed with delivery of supplies or transportation to outside facilities if needed. If animals are left behind without care and owners can not return, animal emergency response personnel will either bring the animals out upon request or will make arrangements to provide food and water on site. The course of action will be determined by the Animal Response Branch Director with authorization of the chain of command.

Shelter Set-Up

- Volunteers must sign in upon arrival (and sign out upon leaving) and must also complete a volunteer waiver form if one is not already on file with the designated emergency sheltering team.
- Assign/Designate a Temporary Animal Shelter Manager (TASM) (member of the emergency sheltering team) to manage the operation of the temporary animal shelter
- The TASM should immediately start an on-going Supervisor's Log to track unusual incidents, note procedures that may need to be adjusted, or keep track of miscellaneous ideas and suggestions for future use.
- Assign team leaders for each area of the temporary animal shelter, i.e. intake/discharge, dog care, cat care, temporary stray hold, etc. Expand or contract as needed for the particular situation.
- Identify communication flow and/or chain of command.
- Identify space in the room/building for each area, i.e. intake/discharge, small dog, large dog, cat, temporary stray hold, supply storage, donation storage, clean up area, outside walking area, trash dumpster, inside visitation area, etc.
- Identify entry and exit points and mark these areas clearly with large signs. If separation of areas can not be accomplished with existing doors/walls, use crime scene tape to rope off, separate, and mark areas.
- Post large signs to name/designate the established areas
- Place a barrier (tarps, plastic sheets, etc.) on walls and floors to protect the property. Use duct tape to seal down the edges to avoid tripping hazards.
- Inventory and record amount and type of beginning supplies, i.e. number of cages, bags of food, gallons of bleach, water bowls, boxes of trash bags, etc.
- Set up cages
 - bedding (disposable, i.e. newspaper, puppy pads, etc.)
 - sturdy, washable water bowls (that can be sanitized)
 - litter trays with litter (disposable)
 - comfort items, i.e. hide boxes, towels to cover kennels
 - attach cage card to record feeding, exercise, behavioral or medical notes
- The Temporary Animal Shelter Manager (TASM) will need to begin immediate planning for shift relief – including the TASM position and veterinary support. Nobody should be allowed to work more than a 12-hour shift.
- Staffing assignments will need to consider and plan for an overnight shift and necessary overnight accommodations (cots, blankets, access to restrooms, security, etc.). Typically, this can be coordinated with Red Cross personnel.
- The TASM will need to determine and post a briefing schedule – a time to brief the arriving shift, and periodic shift briefings to keep staff and volunteers apprised of the situation.
- Lost and Found reports or inquiries will be referred to the local animal control agency or animal shelter.

Spontaneous Unaffiliated Volunteers (SUVs)

- Absent extraordinary circumstances, SUVs will not be used in the operation of the temporary animal shelter due to liability and safety concerns.
- People wishing to assist during an emergency should be asked to consider a monetary or in-kind donation in lieu of volunteer service or should be referred to an agency that is currently accepting new volunteers. It can also be suggested that after the incident, they may wish to pursue an affiliation and training with an animal welfare organization so that in the event of another emergency, they have the training and credentials they will need to volunteer in a temporary animal shelter.
- In the rare situation where the emergency sheltering team is in need of additional assistance and supplemental resources are not available, SUVs will need to fill out a volunteer waiver, provide identification and supply emergency contact information. They should be teamed with a regular volunteer for supervision and given tasks that do not involve animal handling, i.e. sweeping, mopping, washing dishes, emptying trash, re-stocking supplies, etc.

Supervisory Considerations

Provide an immediate safety message to all staff and volunteers: **Safety is the most important consideration.** Personal safety first, followed by team safety, and then public safety.

- The animal control supervisor or manager should establish contact with the law enforcement and/or fire person in charge of the situation or the Operations Chief or Incident Commander if an ICS structure has been activated. Typically, the animal control supervisor or manager will fill the role as Animal Response Branch Director (ARBD).
- The media relations person (PIO or equivalent) should be contacted and asked to disseminate the following information:
 - The EPN (reverse 911) message should advise people in the evacuation area to take pets and livestock with them or call a designated number if they need assistance with animals
 - Advise that a temporary animal shelter has been set up for the pets of people staying at the Red Cross shelter
 - Publicize the website and phone number for locating pet-friendly hotels/motels
 - Advise that the regular animal shelter is providing temporary boarding (at no charge if applicable) for pets of evacuated families that are staying with friends/family/paid lodging that can not accommodate pets
- In consultation with ICS personnel, estimate the number of animals that may require sheltering.
- Strays or evacuated animals - not with their owners - should be taken to the regular animal shelter as the Red Cross temporary animal shelter should be reserved for those pets belonging to people staying at the Red Cross shelter. The temporary shelter should designate a stray and/or a “no owner present” holding area and an animal control officer can be called to transfer those animals to the regular shelter.
- Exotic animals that require special housing and temperature considerations and special diets will not be held at the temporary animal shelter but will be taken by the owners to the regular shelter, a boarding facility or to pet friendly lodging. If the owner is unable to transport the animal, arrangements will be made for an animal control officer to transport the animal to an appropriate location.
- Assure that the Temporary Animal Shelter Manager (TASM) records (on a log) all purchases, attaches receipts to purchase log and saves for final accounting and reconciliation. All donations will also be recorded on a log (see donation management).
- Assist the TASM in making sure that shelter staff members are providing good self-care, i.e. eating healthy meals, drinking plenty of water, taking breaks, and going home for at least 12-hour downtime and recuperation.

Supplies

- Refer to the appendix for a list of supplies that should be available as part of the emergency sheltering team cache or as part of the sheltering supplies in the two (soon to be three) NCR/UASI cache trailers.
- A simple inventory process should be instituted as follows: begin operations with a current and valid inventory from a sheltering cache. Add perishables or other additional items to the inventory list. If no inventory list exists, create one before the shelter opens for operation or as soon possible. Record intake of new supplies on simple logs – one for ordered or purchased supplies and one for donations. At the end of the operation, an inventory should be completed during de-mobilization. A comparison of the event-end inventory to the event-beginning inventory plus purchased and donated items will result in a list of supplies that need to be obtained for re-stocking the cache in addition to a list of extra or unused donations.
- The Temporary Animal Shelter Manager (TASM) should request any needed supplies or additional resources through the Animal Sheltering Group Supervisor (ASGS). The ASGS will notify the Animal Response Branch Director who will order the resources via the Operations Chief or the Logistics Chief. In some situations, the TASM may be directed to send a shelter staff member to a retail establishment to obtain necessary items – but in any regard, all acquisitions should be coordinated via the chain of command.

Visitation

- The Temporary Animal Shelter Manager (TASM) should determine pet owner visitation hours and post those hours promptly and conspicuously. Visitation hours should be different than cleaning and feeding hours (schedules) to avoid congestion and confusion in the kennel area. Visitation hours should be strictly enforced.
- Visitors should be required to show ID prior to being allowed access to the kennel area. Shelter staff should be on hand to assist owners removing pets from cages.
- Visiting areas should be selected and marked off – both inside and outside if available. Owners should be encouraged to walk dogs on leash outdoors for exercise. Cats should only be outside of cages if a secure room (to prevent escape) can be arranged. If no secure room is available for visiting with cats, cats should remain safely kenneled/caged.
- Pet owners should be discouraged from providing food and should limit treats to avoid digestional upset.
- Pet owners should be supplied with plastic bags to pick up droppings.
- The general public will not be allowed to enter the shelter or to visit with dogs. Media requests for access will be funneled through the TASM to the Animal Sheltering Group Supervisor and on up the chain of command.