

NORTH CAROLINA EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN (NCEOP)  
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**ANIMAL PROTECTION (NCESF-11)**  
2023

**I. INTRODUCTION**

**A. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this appendix is to outline response activities to help protect domesticated and wild animal resources. Public health, the food supply, and environmental resources will be safeguarded when the animal population is protected. This appendix will also ensure the humane care and treatment of animals during disasters in order to increase compliance by citizens who may disregard evacuation recommendations due to a perceived inability to evacuate with their companion animals.

**B. SCOPE**

Animal Protection actions will be aimed at all animals, whether owned, stray, or domestic, that may need help during disaster situations.

**II. SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS**

**A. SITUATION**

Any disaster that threatens humans usually threatens animals as well. Whether it is a natural disaster or one related to human activities, caring for animals, either domesticated or wild, will require special considerations. Depending on the circumstances and nature of the catastrophe, it may be necessary to provide water, shelter, food, and/or medical care for animals that exceed existing facility capabilities. It may require relocation or relief efforts for pets, livestock, wildlife, or exotic animals.

Under some conditions, there could be a shortage of equipment, trained personnel, or even the loss of sheltering resources. Emergency personnel may be in contact with pet owners, people concerned about the welfare of animals, and those who do not prioritize emergency care support for animals. It will be necessary for emergency responders to develop and maintain communication capability with disparate people and organizations.

**B. ASSUMPTIONS**

1. Animal protection planning will enhance care and recovery for animals and people during emergencies. In keeping in compliance with the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards (PETS) Act, these plans will include measures to identify housing and shelter, communicate information with the public, and ensure proper animal care, reunification, fostering, adoption, and release (in the case of wildlife).

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2. Public information will be issued through various forms of media. This information will include locations where farm animals and pets may be accepted during emergency or disaster conditions.

### **III. ORGANIZATION AND ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **A. LEAD STATE AGENCY**

##### **1. NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY (NCDPS)**

###### **NORTH CAROLINA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (NCEM)**

- a. Notify Animal Protection partners of emergency or disaster event, SEOC activation, and need to staff SEOC.
- b. Provide assistance as needed through field services personnel.
- c. Assign County resource requests to appropriate Animal Protection partners and coordinate requests for resources from all state agencies.
- d. Request companion animal support for state-coordinated shelters.
- e. Request federal assistance, as required.

#### **B. LEAD TECHNICAL AGENCY**

##### **1. NC DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES (NCDA&CS)**

- a. Serves as member of the State Emergency Response Team (SERT).
- b. Lead and partner with supporting animal and agriculture agencies and other stakeholders such as the State Animal and Agricultural Response Team (SART).
- c. Coordinate resources to support the rescue and sheltering of companion animals in disasters.
- d. Control disease and provide for the feeding of livestock and other farm animals.
- e. Provide for the management of animal response volunteers.

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- f. Coordinate support agency activities.

**C. SUPPORTING STATE AGENCIES**

**1. NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY (NCSU)**

**NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**

- a. Provide technical advice to the SERT.
- b. Provide personnel and equipment necessary and useful for response to animal emergencies.
- c. Provide partnership with the SART and County Animal Response Teams (CARTs).

**NC STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE (CVM)**

- a. Provide technical and academic advice and assistance to the SERT and SART.
- b. Provide personnel and equipment to deploy based on availability of requested resources.

**2. NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (NCDHHS)**

**DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH (DPH)**

- a. Provide support for investigation of zoonotic diseases and implementation of rabies control measures.
- b. Provide environmental health recommendations as needed to ensure pet shelter activities do not adversely affect human health.

**3. NC DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES (NCDNCR)**

**NC ZOOLOGICAL PARK**

- a. Provide guidance to the SERT on the control and protection of exotic animals that are affected by the disaster.
- b. Provide personnel and equipment as required to control or protect exotic animals.

#### **4. NC WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMISSION (NCWRC)**

- a. Provide guidance to the SERT on the control and protection of wildlife affected by a disaster.
- b. Provide personnel and equipment as required to protect wildlife.
- c. Coordinate with licensed certified wildlife rehabilitation centers for the care of any orphaned or injured wildlife that is able to be safely captured and rehabilitated.

### **IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS**

#### **A. GENERAL**

The Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) manages and coordinates animal protection activities during emergencies and disasters. The State Agricultural Response Team (SART) is an interagency partnership established as part of the SERT under leadership from the NCDA&CS. SART and other partner agencies and organizations support NCDA&CS in this mission through agency-specific tasks, volunteer management, receiving and distributing of donations, and the coordination of volunteer response groups when planning for and responding to an emergency affecting livestock and companion animals.

Responsibility for situation assessment and determination of resource needs lies primarily with county emergency management offices, county animal services, and local incident commanders. The State Emergency Response Team (SERT), the Federal Emergency Response Team (ERT), and the Joint Field Office (JFO) rely on local assessments of impact and needs.

When local capabilities are exceeded, requests for animal protection assistance and resources, such as food, medicine, shelter material, specialized personnel, and additional veterinary medical professionals, will be transmitted from the local emergency management office to the State EOC and communicated to the Agriculture Emergency Operations Center (Ag EOC). Should the need for Federal resources exist, the State EOC will coordinate requests for Federal assistance. The coordination and tasking of these national level resources will be coordinated at the Ag EOC in conjunction with State EOC incident objectives.

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Issues involving exotic animals and animals that are usually kept in a controlled environment, such as zoos, circuses, or carnivals, will be handled by local animal services, wildlife resources, or zoological personnel and returned to controlled environments.

Domestic animals and livestock that are displaced, lost, strayed, surrendered, homeless, or otherwise in danger shall be the responsibility of their owners or designees when possible. For these animals, local Animal Control will take a leadership role where ownership cannot be established, owners cannot be contacted, or owners cannot care for their animals. Animal services may receive assistance from NCDA&CS and NC Cooperative Extension. County Animal Response Teams (CARTs) may assist in this mission as requested by county emergency management personnel. Other volunteer groups may also assist in this function. If their deployment is coordinated by NCDA&CS, they must have a signed Memorandum of Agreement or Understanding and written approval of the State Veterinarian or Incident Commander at the Ag EOC. The animals will be sheltered, fed, and returned to their owners if possible. Animals with owners who are unable to care for them or where owners are not able to be located will become the property of the county, and final disposition will be determined by the county animal service.

Actual animal protection operations will be managed in accordance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS). Situation assessment information will be transmitted according to established procedures.

### **B. NOTIFICATION**

This appendix and implementing procedures will be activated in the event of a disaster causing a major requirement for animal protection. The SERT Leader will determine when it is necessary to initiate animal protection activities and notify the NCDA&CS SERT partner for management.

### **C. RESPONSE ACTIONS**

#### **1. INITIAL**

- a. Assess the needs and numbers of affected animals.
- b. Support animal rescue and sheltering personnel as requested.
- c. Support evacuation and sheltering operations by helping identify volunteers, supplies, and equipment.

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- d. Support the opening of existing or temporary rescue animal shelters for stray, lost, and homeless pets by supplementing through the SERT partnerships of SART/CARTs, NCDA&CS, NCSU CVM, and NC Cooperative Extension.
- e. Provide support to control wild and exotic animals.

**2. CONTINUING**

- a. Support sheltering and feeding of animals including assisting with volunteer and donations management at the State level.
- b. Support opening of additional shelters as required.
- c. Make media appeals based on actual needs for donations, search for owners, and other needs as required.

**D. RECOVERY ACTIONS**

**1. INITIAL**

- a. Support efforts to identify owners of lost, strayed, and homeless animals and return them to their rightful owners.
- b. Support efforts to foster or adopt animals without owners or whose owners can no longer care for them.
- c. Support euthanasia operations, if necessary, when animals, such as companion pets, cannot be adopted or owner cannot be found.

**2. CONTINUING**

- a. Continue recovery actions as listed above.
- b. Deactivate and demobilize resources as the situation dictates.

**V. DIRECTION, CONTROL AND COORDINATION**

**1. LOCAL**

Animal owners are responsible for the protection of their pets. Animal owners should plan for animal care during disasters as they prepare their family preparedness plan. Counties, usually through their Animal Control Officers and animal shelters will protect animals affected by any disaster to

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include rescue, shelter, control, feeding, and preventive immunization of animals left homeless, surrendered, lost, or strayed as a result of the disaster. County Animal Response Teams may be organized to manage and coordinate animal protection activities. CARTs mirror SART in their makeup and include all local level partners that can assist animals in catastrophic events.

### **2. STATE**

The NCDA&CS manages and coordinates animal protection activities during emergencies and disasters. They work with a variety of partners, local emergency management coordinators and Federal Coordinating Officers (FCOs) to provide animal protection assistance to local jurisdictions in the form of guidance, policy, food, water, medicine, and other resources as may be required. The SART encourages the establishment of County Animal Response Teams. The State and majority of counties have built additional sheltering capacity in the form of Companion Animal Mobile Equipment Trailers (CAMETs), Companion Animal Sheltering Trailers (CASTs), and trained volunteers in the NC Veterinary Response Corps (NCVRC). These assets are distributed across the state and may be engaged via county to county mutual aid or requests to the state via emergency management channels and NC SPARTA. NCVRC management is accomplished via NC TERMS by NCDA&CS Emergency Programs Division.

### **3. FEDERAL**

USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Animal Care and Veterinary Services provide coordination and integration of Federal resources through NIMS structured support centers. Animal Care assists with implementation of PETS Act activities and Veterinary Services does the same for livestock and equine activities. Assistance includes personnel, technology, feed, veterinary support, assistance with reimbursement procedures, and resource requests.