

Ashe County Animal Protection Plan

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose Statement:

To protect wild and domesticated animal resources, the public health, the public food supply, the environment, and to ensure the humane care and treatment of animals in case of a large-scale emergency, including hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, wind driven water, drought, fire, explosion, building collapse, commercial transportation accidents, chemical spills, winter storm, outbreaks of foreign animal disease or other situations that cause animal suffering.

1.2 Scope:

This Plan is intended for use by local government to take immediate action in providing a means of care and control to minimize animal suffering in the event of a large-scale emergency. This action will be aimed at all animals that may need help whether such animals are owned, stray, domestic, or wild.

Within Ashe County, the Emergency Management Coordinator or his/her authorized representative(s) may place into effect-established plans and procedures and direct both the emergency and recovery aspects of the incident. The Coordinator may deviate from these procedures when, in his/her judgment, immediate and direct action is necessary to protect the public safety.

2.0 Affected Agencies Responsibilities

2.1 Primary Agencies:

A. Ashe County Animal Control Department:

1. Coordinate support agencies to manage animal protection in large-scale emergencies.
2. Provide and coordinate personnel, equipment, and shelter as required to protect domestic and sick and/or injured non-domestic animals.

3. Coordinate with the Ashe County Health Department, the disposal of deceased animals that may impact the public health. Provide services to control injuries, bites, and diseases related to the protection of animals.

B. Ashe County Office of Emergency Management:

Activate the Emergency Operations Center, if necessary. Responsible for overall direction and control of the emergency incident.

2.2 Support Agencies:

A. Ashe County Veterinarian's:

Provide a list of available volunteers to aid in the protection animals. When possible, provide personnel, equipment, and shelter as required to shelter and care for pets of evacuated citizens and in cases when established shelters are filled or destroyed.

B. Cooperative Extension Service:

Provide a list of available volunteers to aid in the protection of animals. When possible, provide personnel, equipment, and shelter as required to shelter and care for livestock, wild animals, and injured domestic and non-domestic animals. The N. C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) will be responsible for the enforcement of state regulations concerning livestock health and the movements of animals affected by those regulations. NCDA will also assist in providing information and direction whenever possible with regard to the general health of livestock in these areas. Aid in the protection of livestock during an emergency situation. Maintain presence at County Emergency Operations Center during disasters.

2.3 Additional Resources:

A. North Carolina Veterinary Medical Association:

Provide personnel to aid in the medical treatment of animals. Activate regional Veterinary Medical Assistance Teams (VMAT).

B. Humane Society of the United States:

Provide personnel and equipment as required to rescue and care for domestic and non-domestic animals.

C. American Humane Association:

Provide personnel and equipment as required to rescue and care for domestic and non-domestic animals.

D. N. C. Wildlife Resource Commission:

Provide personnel and equipment as required to protect wildlife.

E. Private Boarding Kennels, Stables, Dog Clubs, and Horse Clubs:

Provide personnel, equipment, and shelter as required to shelter and care for pets from evacuated citizens and in cases when established animal shelters are filled or destroyed.

F. Private Farms:

Provide shelter and supplies to care for displaced livestock.

G. Agricultural Center:

Provide shelter and supplies to care for displaced livestock.

3.0 Planning Assumptions

- A. The owners of pets or livestock, when notified of an upcoming emergency, will take reasonable steps to shelter and provide for animals under their care and/or control.
- B. Natural, technological, or manmade disasters could affect the well being of domesticated or non-domesticated animals. The County should plan both for emergency situations and to carry out response and recovery operations utilizing local resources. Outside animal care and rescue assistance would likely be available in most large-scale emergencies affecting the County.
- C. Animal protection planning should ensure the proper care and recovery of animals impacted during an emergency. These plans may include measures to identify housing and shelter for animals, communicate information to the public, and proper animal release
- D. Public information statements will be issued through the various media outlets. This information will include locations where domestic and non-domestic animals (including livestock and wild animals) may be accepted during emergency situations.
- E. A large-scale emergency in Ashe County may warrant immediate response from State and Local personnel, agencies, and organizations. However, emergency situations may become compounded due to the nature of the emergency and also require activation of additional specialized agencies through mutual aid.
- F. Through effective animal protection planning and organization, disaster relief efforts would be more expedient.

4.0 Concept of Operations

4.1 General:

- A. The primary and support agencies identified in these Standard Operating Guidelines will manage and coordinate local animal protection activities. These agencies will use

established animal protection and support organizations, processes, and procedures. Responsibility for situation assessment and determination of resource needs in the event of a large-scale emergency lies primarily with the Ashe County Office of Emergency Management in cooperation with the Ashe County Animal Control, North Carolina Extension Service, and local incident coordinators.

- B. 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 Emergency Management office. Should the need for Federal or State resources exist, the State Emergency Operations Center will coordinate the requests for assistance.
- C. Animal protection operations will be managed under the Ashe County Emergency Operations Plan. Public Health concerns will be managed in accordance with appropriate Ashe County plans and procedures in coordination with the Ashe County Department of Public Health.
- D. Animals Included Under the Plan:
 - 1. The sheltering and protection of domestic and non-domestic animals (including livestock) are the responsibility of their owners.
 - 2. Domestic and non-domestic animals that are lost, strayed, incapable of being cared for by their owners, or in danger to themselves or the public will be the responsibility of Ashe County Animal Control officials, or other identified agencies. These animals will be sheltered, fed, and, if possible, returned to their owners. If the animals cannot be returned to their owners, they will be disposed of in accordance with established Animal Control procedures. Wild animals should be left to their own survival instincts. Wild animals out of their natural habitats that are in danger either to themselves or the public will be the responsibility of N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission personnel, in cooperation with local Animal Control officials, and returned to their natural habitat if possible.

4.2 Notification:

This plan and implementing procedures will be activated in the event of a large-scale emergency causing a significant need for animal protection. The Ashe County Branch of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service in cooperation with the Ashe County Office of Emergency Management will determine when these procedures will be implemented and notify the appropriate primary, support, and mutual aid agencies. The Agricultural Extension Agent will maintain a call down notification system.

4.3 Communications:

Communications between the primary and support agencies will occur primarily through telephone, facsimile and cellular telephone transmission. Amateur radio will be used as a backup system if other communication is impossible due to the nature of the emergency

situation.

4.4 Public Information (PI):

A spokesperson from Ashe County will be responsible for the coordination of all media activities and press releases associated with the protection of animals.

PI responsibilities may include:

1. Notifying the public of who to contact to determine which shelters and or temporary placements are available to take lost/stray animals, animals that they cannot care for, or animals that need immediate medical assistance.
2. Delivering instructions to the public to prepare their pets for an impending emergency (See attached Annex A) and/or instructions for minor "at home" medical responses for pets injured in an emergency situation (information developed as needed).
3. Initiating a system to direct inquiries on lost pets to the appropriate animal shelters.
4. Providing other information as appropriate to the situation.

4.5 Response:

The owners of pets or livestock, when notified of an emergency will take all reasonable steps to shelter and provide for animals under their control.

A. Search and Rescue

1. Domestic Pets:

Domestic pets loose or in need of assistance due to the emergency or to the death or evacuation of their owners will be the responsibility of Ashe County Animal Control officials.

2. Livestock:

Livestock loose or in need of assistance due to the emergency or to the death or evacuation of their owners will be the responsibility of Ashe County branch of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service.

3. Wild Animals:

Wild Animals out of their natural habitat that are endangering either themselves or the human population will be the responsibility of N. C. Wildlife Resource Commission personnel in cooperation with Ashe County Animal Control officials. In the event that animals cannot be rescued due to the emergency situation, food and medical assistance may be delivered to the animals by the appropriate agency when possible.

4. Additional Aid:

In the event that Ashe County Animal Control resources are unable to meet the need for search and rescue personnel, a representative from Ashe County Animal Control Department will request search and rescue assistance from the American Humane Association and/or the Humane Society of the United States and/or other available rescue groups and notify the Emergency Management Coordinator of such requests.

5. Foot and Mouth Disease:

In the event of a Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak, the responsibilities of the County Animal Response Team will be as outlined in the May 2001 protocols established by North Carolina Emergency Management. Under these procedures, the CART would activate as necessary to implement procedures consistent with the state plan. Specifically, the CART would assist in data compilation in regard to owner contact information, species of animals, approximate number of animals, location of animals and map development.

B. Shelters

1. Evacuated Domestic Pets:

a. Private Resources:

Domestic pets from evacuated citizens will be sheltered at private boarding kennels and veterinarian hospitals as close to the evacuation shelters as possible. Upon the activation of evacuation shelters for citizens, a representative from the Ashe County Animal Control will be contacted by the shelter manager and requested to initiate the opening of prearranged private boarding kennels and veterinarian hospitals as boarding facilities. A veterinarian volunteer will be available as needed. Pets with significant injuries or illnesses will be transported to an animal hospital designated for the medical treatment of animals. Pet owners will be primarily responsible for ensuring the transportation of their evacuated pets to either the shelter facility, hospital or private kennels. Ashe County Animal Control will be responsible for in ensuring that a tracking system is in place to unite sheltered pets with their rightful owners.

b. Evacuated Citizens with Special Needs:

Citizens with special needs (individuals with mental or physical handicaps who require evacuation assistance) may require assistance in evacuating their pets. If special needs individuals are unwilling or unable to make special arrangements for the sheltering of their pets, then the individuals and their pets will be transported to private shelters or boarding facilities. Upon arrival at the shelter,

pets not trained specifically to assist the individual (e.g. Seeing Eye dogs) will be transported to a private boarding facility or other appropriate facility. In the event that the individual and the pet cannot be separated due to the individual's infirmity, the pet will be sheltered in the same facility in a separate room or area.

2. Stray/Lost Domestic Pets:

All stray/lost domestic pets recovered by Ashe County Animal Control will be sheltered at the Ashe County Animal Shelter. Any pets whose owners cannot care for their pets or domestic pets found by citizens will also be sheltered at these locations. Private boarding kennels and veterinarian shelters will serve as overflow shelters and will be requested to open through the Ashe County Animal Control representative, as necessary. Unclaimed animals will be disposed of according to county procedures.

3. Livestock:

Due to the size of most livestock and the inability to transport large numbers of farm animals, owners are expected to develop shelter and/or evacuation plans, to include transportation and sheltering plans for their own animals. When possible, livestock may be sheltered at private stables. Also, private farms located throughout the county may be used as shelter facilities for livestock.

In the event of an emergency situation, Ashe County Cooperative Extension will contact prearranged farms and request their assistance in the sheltering operation. Prior to any emergency evacuation, transportation or sheltering of livestock, owners will be required to sign a waiver of liability for evacuation, transport and sheltering. Owners will also be required to sign a form acknowledging their responsibility for all costs incurred in evacuation, transport and sheltering.

Stranded or isolated animals that can be sheltered in place may require the use of outside resources for feeding operations. These will be handled on a case by case basis through the Emergency Operations Center and the Cooperative Extension Service.

4. Wild Animals:

If possible, wild animals outside of their natural habitat endangering the public will be transported back to their natural habitat. The North Carolina Wildlife Office will be contacted for control procedures. Ashe Animal Control will be contacted if there is a public safety risk or injuries to persons are involved.

5. Incapacitation of Shelters:

In the event that established shelters are destroyed or incapable of functioning due to the nature of the emergency situation, private boarding kennels, veterinarian hospitals and stables, may be requested to open as boarding and/or medical facilities. If normal shelter operations are incapacitated, Ashe County Animal Control may elect to open a temporary shelter in a suitable location. In rare cases, during large-scale emergencies, animals may be moved outside Ashe County for care and protection.

6. Staff/Supplies:

a. Staff:

Private boarding kennels, veterinarian hospitals and livestock shelters will be responsible for the staffing of their own facilities and will be compensated by the citizens who use the animal shelter according to the established policies of that shelter. Each individual animal shelter will be responsible for developing the work schedules for employees and volunteers.

b. Supplies:

Each animal shelter will identify resources for potable water, food, medical, cleaning and shelter supplies in advance of an emergency situation. Domestic and non-domestic animal food companies, medical suppliers, water suppliers and cleaning product suppliers will be contacted and requested to begin the shipment of supplies to an established delivery point. The delivery point will serve as a storage center and a distribution center for the various shelters and hospitals. If the need arises, resource agencies (e.g. kennel clubs) may be requested to donate cages and other various shelter supplies.

c. Medical:

1. Hospitals:

Veterinarian hospitals in the immediate and surrounding areas will serve as the primary medical facilities and medical shelters as space permits.

2. Staff:

Depending on the extent of the emergency situation, volunteers or Veterinary Medical Assistance Teams from the American Veterinary Medical Association may be requested to assist in the medical treatment of domestic and non-domestic animals.

d. Bites/Disease Control:

The Ashe County Health Department will administer vaccinations (purchased by the individual receiving the vaccination or their affiliate organization) to rescue and shelter personnel as needed and will insure that treatment of bites and injuries is available to affected persons. Outbreaks of rabies is a serious threat during an emergency situation. Appropriate steps to control that threat will be implemented by the Ashe County Health Department.

4.6 Recovery:

A. Release/Destruction:

1. Domestic Pets/Livestock:

Ashe County Animal Control will support efforts to identify owners of stray/lost animals. If owners cannot be found, Ashe County Animal Control representatives will attempt to adopt or sell (only in cases of livestock) the animals according to their established procedures. Animals for which no owners can be found and which cannot be placed in adoptive care or sold will be disposed of in accordance with established Animal Control procedures.

2. Wild Animals:

N. C. Wildlife Commission in cooperation with the Ashe County Animal Control will support efforts to reintroduce wild animals back to their natural habitats.

B. Disposal of Animal Carcasses

Responsibility for disposal of deceased animals will fall primarily to the animal owner. If health issues arise, the Ashe County Public Health Department in coordination with Animal Control will arrange for disposal of:

1. Euthanized animals
2. Animals killed in the emergency situation

4.7 Review and Update:

On a regular basis, this procedure will be reviewed and updated as appropriate by Ashe County Animal Control Department, the Ashe County Office of Emergency Management, North Carolina Cooperative Extension, the County Animal Response Team and other affected agencies. This procedure will be periodically tested by an appropriate exercise method.

4.8 Approval

Upon approval by the County Animal Response Team and the Ashe County Board of Commissioners, this plan will supplement the existing Ashe County Emergency Operations Plan.

Ashe County Disaster Planning Tips For Pets, Livestock, and Wildlife

Domestic Pets

- If you evacuate your home, **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR PETS BEHIND**. Pets most likely cannot survive on their own, and if by chance they do, you may not be able to find them when you return.
- For public health reasons, many emergency shelters cannot accept pets. Find out which motels and hotels in your area allow pets. Include your local animal shelter's number in your list of emergency number, they will be able to provide information concerning pets during a disaster.
- Make sure identification tags are up to date and securely fastened to your pet's collar. If possible, attach the address and/or phone number of your evacuation site. Make sure you have a current photo of your pet for identification purposes.
- Make sure you have a secure pet carrier, leash or harness for your pet so that if the animal panics, it cannot escape.
- Take pet food, bottled water, medications, veterinary records, cat litter/pan, can opener, food dishes, first aid kit and other supplies with you in case they are not available later.
- Make sure you have a copy of your pet's medical records. If you are unable to return to your home right away, you may need to board your pet. Most boarding kennels, veterinarians, and animal shelters require that your pet's vaccinations are current.
- If it is impossible to take your pet with you to temporary shelter, contact friends, family, veterinarians, or boarding kennels to arrange for care. Make sure medical and feeding information, food, medicine and other supplies accompany your pet to its foster home.

Livestock

- Evacuate livestock whenever possible. The evacuation sites should have or be able to readily obtain food, water, veterinary care, handling equipment and facilities.
- If evacuation is not possible, a decision must be made whether to move large animals to available shelter or turn them outside. This decision should be determined based on the type of disaster and the soundness and location of the shelter. All animals should have some form of identification that will help facilitate their return.

Wildlife

- Wild animals often seek higher ground, which, during floods, eventually become submerged

(i.e., island), and the animals become stranded. If the island is large enough and provides suitable shelter, you can leave food appropriate to the species. Animals have a flight response and will flee from anyone approaching too closely. If the animal threatens to rush into the water, back away from the island.

- Wildlife often seek refuge from floodwater on upper levels of a home and may remain inside even after the water recedes. If you meet a rat or snake face to face, be careful but don't panic. Open a window or other escape route and the animal will probably leave on its own. Never attempt to capture a wild animal unless you have the training, protective clothing, restraint equipment and caging necessary to perform the job.
- Beware of an increased number of snakes and other predators who will try to feed on the carcasses of reptiles, amphibians and small mammals that have been drowned or crushed in their burrows or under rocks.
- Often, during natural disasters, mosquitoes and dead animal carcasses may present disease problems. Outbreaks of anthrax, encephalitis and other diseases may occur. Contact your local emergency management office for help.

Further Assistance

If you see any injured or stranded animal in need of assistance, or if you have any other questions or concerns about animal protection during an emergency situation, contact the following:

For pets, contact Ashe County Animal Control Officer Jeff Jones at 982-4060;

For livestock, contact North Carolina Cooperative Extension Agricultural Agent Charles Young at 219-2650.

During a disaster situation, contact the Ashe County Emergency Operations Center at 219-2522.