

Event: Hurricane Katrina  
Date: September 12, 2005  
Situation: AVMA Hurricane Katrina Disaster Situation Report

### **AVMA Veterinary Medical Assistance Team (VMAT) Update:**

#### **VMAT-1: Louisiana**

The State Mission Assignment for VMAT-1 is as follows:

- To assist State Veterinarian with agricultural and veterinary service assessment
- SERV Unit one will accompany DMAT HI-1 to St. Bernard Parish to help deal with numerous animal issues
- SERV Units two, three and four will assist VMAT-5 at Lamar-Dixon Animal Shelter

Another VMAT-1 unit was stationed back at the New Orleans airport. Owned animals were seen at the airport and VMAT members went over to the staging area for search and rescue dogs to offer VMAT assistance. Ended up providing needed veterinary care to a couple of the working dogs and suggested that an official VMAT deployment be requested to provide medical care to the rescue dogs while they are deployed. There is a good Incident Command System (ICS) system recently implemented at the State Veterinarian's Office.

#### **VMAT-2: Mississippi**

##### **Submitted by Dr. Patrice Klein, VMAT-2 Team Commander**

Gulfport Field hospital set up and running as of Friday, 9/9/05. The hospital was very busy as soon as it opened - the team saw 60 animals presented to the field hospital the first day. Field teams attended to approximately 40 animals as described below.

VMAT2 also daily sending small teams to the field to work with USAR teams, DMORT teams (cadaver dogs), and to continue area assessments along the Gulf coast extending from Biloxi west to the LA border (Hancock County, Waveland area and west). Disaster Medical Assistance Teams (DMATs) in the area are contacting VMAT2 when animals are discovered during their missions. VMAT2 working with the HSUS contingent in

Gulfport area... our field hospital is co-located with the animal sheltering teams. VMAT2 also assisting in animal carcass disposal efforts.

Communication technology (internet, fax, cell phones) remains an issue.

Satellite phones work for routine phone communication but internet and fax capabilities are sporadic.

Team member rotations have begun today to demob some folks from MS and replace with team members activated to deploy. Approximately half of the first deployed group have volunteered to stay 1-2 more weeks to provide continuity in service and to orient newer members arriving.

I am exceedingly proud of my VMAT2 team!

### **VMAT-3: Mississippi**

Is in Hattiesburg

### **VMAT-5: Louisiana**

In Gonzales, LA at the Lamar-Dixon Equine Exhibition Center where somewhere between 2000 and 3000 animals are being housed. Operations there have been reorganized recently and ICS is being implemented.

The VMAT efforts are made possible from an annual grant from the American Veterinary Medical Foundation (AVMF). Those interested in contributing to the Animal Disaster Relief and Response Fund can send a check to the American Veterinary Medical Foundation, Department 20-1122, P.O. Box 5940, Carol Stream, IL 60197, with "Animal Disaster Relief and Response Fund" written on the check's note section. Online donations are accepted at [www.avmf.org](http://www.avmf.org).

AVMA's disaster preparedness booklet *Saving the Whole Family* is available at [http://www.avma.org/disaster/saving\\_family.asp](http://www.avma.org/disaster/saving_family.asp). Full text available for free from the Web site.

### **AVMA Report:**

#### **1) Volunteers to Help in Disaster Relief**

The Department of Health and Human Services has established a website <https://volunteer.hhs.gov> and toll-free number (1-866-KATMEDI) to help identify health care professionals and relief personnel to assist in Hurricane Katrina relief efforts.

The US Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Inspection Service is looking for volunteers (veterinarians, veterinary technicians and assistants, veterinary students) to assist in recovery efforts and in future natural and animal disease emergencies. Send an email to [EmergencyVMO@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:EmergencyVMO@aphis.usda.gov) with the subject line "New NAHERC Volunteer" for more information on how you can get involved.

## **2) Temporary Housing/Employment Opportunities for Veterinarians and Veterinary Staff**

In an effort to assist veterinarians, veterinary technicians and other veterinary staff affected by Hurricane Katrina, AVMA is establishing a list of people and clinics willing to offer temporary employment and/or housing to these displaced individuals. These offers will be posted online.

In addition, AVMA wants to establish a database of displaced veterinarians, veterinary technicians and veterinary staff so we can start assisting these individuals with finding temporary employment or housing.

If you would be interested in offering temporary employment/housing or are a displaced veterinary related individual and want to be added to our lists, email us at [vetcareers@avma.org](mailto:vetcareers@avma.org) or call Cindy Coy at 1-800-248-2862 ext 6683. Please put **Katrina** in the subject line and give us your full name, phone number and email address (if possible) and we will contact you for more information.

We have had contact with several of the veterinary state boards in all of the states and some of the Canadian provinces and have received back about 25 responses with information regarding licensure requirements for hiring displaced veterinarians. We are encouraging the State Veterinary Medical Associations to work with their corresponding Veterinary State Boards to establish guidelines for temporary employment requirements so that you may better inform your members before they extend an employment offer. The AVMA website will also provide the information we have received from our inquiries and it will be updated daily. It is our understanding that the AAVSB has pledged to waive any score report fees for purposes of licensure in other states.

**If you are a state who has already established a temporary employment job board, please send us a link to your site so we are not duplicating your efforts.**

Dr. Kimberly Rudloff

Assistant Director, Membership and Field Services, ext. 6679

[krudloff@avma.org](mailto:krudloff@avma.org)

## **3) Information about GHLIT and PLIT Insurance – (Provided by Dr. Janet Donlin)**

The AVMA PLIT, AVMA GHLIT and their endorsed insurance carriers are deeply saddened by the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina. We are ready to assist you through these challenging times.

**Contact information for the AVMA PLIT**

The Hartford and other insurers involved in the PLIT-sponsored program that provide the business owner's package insurance, already have emergency teams in place, but they have not been able to get into most of the affected areas. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> hurricane these insurers have been involved with since last year so they should be able to respond efficiently. We estimate that around 65 practices insured by The Hartford were in the path of the storm. Only a couple of calls have been received at this point, but as telephone communication in the affected region resumes, members insured through The Hartford may call 1-800-327-3636 (24 hours a day). If a member has any personal lines insurance (homeowners or auto) through the PLIT's endorsed carrier Liberty Mutual they may call 1-800-713-7379 or go to [libertymutualinsurance.com](http://libertymutualinsurance.com) to report a claim. If we at the AVMA PLIT may be of any assistance, please call us at 1-800-228-7548.

### **Contact information for the AVMA GHLIT**

Customer service representatives are available to assist in answering questions regarding medical or disability claims, policy and premium inquiries, pharmacy and prescriptions as well as network provider information. The number to call for pharmacy and prescription assistance is 800-966-5772. For all other questions call 1-800-621-6360 and enter prompt 1 immediately. You then will have the option to direct your call to customer service representative for assistance with your specific question. Don't forget that you can access claim forms through our website [www.avmaghlit.org](http://www.avmaghlit.org).

### **Contact Information for LA Animal Rescue Needs –**

To report a lost or found animal:

Katrina@ldaf.louisiana.gov – **preferred avenue for reports**

Website for more information: [www.vetmed.lsu.edu](http://www.vetmed.lsu.edu)

Pet finder -- [www.petfinder.com](http://www.petfinder.com)

HSUS --1-800-HUMANE-1

### **Contact Information for MS Animal Rescue Needs**

To report a lost or found animal call: 1-888-722-3106 (8am-6pm daily)

Pet finder -- [www.petfinder.com](http://www.petfinder.com)

HSUS --1-800-HUMANE-1

### **Other Reports:**

**M. A. Littlefield-Chabaud, DVM, MS: Assistant State Veterinarian:** I can not express my appreciation enough to the volunteers here in Baton Rouge—the Cajun Clickers Computer Club, numerous volunteers, and the Scientology Relief Ministry that have shown up and answered phones, compiled data lists and dealt with people. The phone rings all night.

Last night we reached critical mass, the media and other observers have sent stories around, but the truest story, with the most correct details, come from this command center. Please do not accept the other reports as fact. Many that I have seen have very dated and incorrect details.

We have to act within what we as veterinarians, including the State Veterinarian, AVIC and Public Health Veterinarians see as the best for all animals and people there.

The veterinary students are shadowing our VMAT team and other veterinarians and learning more veterinary medicine than they will ever learn in veterinary school. The dermatology cases, the ophthalmology cases, the endocrine cases, the parasite cases.

Due to the overwhelming response of the American public, we are not currently in need of supplies. Thank you so much for giving so much for the care of these animals!

The phones are very busy. please be patient and either call later or we especially recommend using the web site.

For Hurricane Katrina information, questions, donations, opportunities to volunteer, etc. please go the website for more information [www.vetmed.lsu.edu](http://www.vetmed.lsu.edu), including email addresses.

Article published Sep 4, 2005

### **State's poultry industry dealt tremendous blow**

**By Ana Radelat MOSELLE** - Because of Hurricane Katrina's wrath, there are millions of dead chickens in Mississippi, prompting health concerns and dealing the poultry industry a blow that is expected to take nearly half a year to recover.

As part of the chicken belt, a swath of chicken growing and processing that runs through Arkansas, Missouri, Louisiana, Georgia and Texas, Mississippi is a major producer of chicken and turkeys. According to the National Chicken Council, about 10 percent of the poultry consumed in the United States comes from Mississippi, much of that in the south central area that was stricken by the killer storm.

Before the hurricane struck Monday, Craig Bryant, a farmer near Moselle, was raising 40,000 chickens in four coops to sell to Sanderson Farms for slaughter.

Katrina destroyed three of his chicken houses, badly damaged the fourth and killed every one of his birds.

"There's nothing left," said Craig's father, Donald Bryant.

Most chicken growers in South Mississippi are in the same situation, said Jimmy Pierce, the feed mill supervisor at Sanderson Foods in Laurel.

"We haven't got a head count of the chickens we've lost, but it's got to be in the millions," he said.

Sanderson Foods used to process about 1 million chickens a day in its four plants that have been shut down by Katrina in Laurel, McComb, Collins and Hammond, La. Pierce predicted it would take four to six months for production to come back to pre-Katrina levels.

According to Richard Lobb, spokesman for the National Chicken Council, 10 of Mississippi's 14 poultry processing plants have been shut down since Katrina cut their power Monday.

Now the problem is there's no chickens to slaughter. And there's little diesel fuel to run plant generators or the trucks that take poultry to the plants and processed chicken to customers.

"This has the potential to drive up prices," Lobb said.

Despite the problems, Lobb said some of the plants plan to resume operations next week.

Another setback for the industry is that three ports that handle most exports were demolished - Gulfport, Pascagoula and New Orleans.

Farmers are trying to cope with millions of dead birds that must be disposed of.

The federal government wants to help, said Joe Anelli, a veterinarian with the Agriculture Department's Animal and Plant Inspection Service.

Anelli said 11 USDA veterinarians have been dispatched to Mississippi to determine the best way to dispose of the birds.

That may be to turn them into huge compost mounds with the help of sawdust or finding landfills where they can be dumped without harm to the environment, he said.

The USDA is ready to help farmers get rid of the birds. It's thinking of bringing in backhoes and hiring private contractors.

But federal officials have been hamstrung in their efforts. They're not able to travel to South Mississippi because of a shortage of fuel and the trees that still block many rural roads.

"They just can't get to where the chickens are," Anelli said.

Decomposing chickens can breed salmonella, a bacteria that causes severe intestinal illnesses. But Anelli said there's only a slight chance the birds will present a health problem.

The USDA was faced with a similar situation after Hurricane Floyd battered the poultry growing areas of North Carolina, he said.

"But I have to admit this is more severe," he said.

Meanwhile, poultry workers are patiently waiting in line outside Hattiesburg's shuttered Marshall Durbin plant to collect paychecks for shifts worked last week.

"No one knows when we'll be able to work again," said plant worker Primitivo Gonzalez.

## **Toxins in Floodwaters Kill Five**

**Thursday, September 08, 2005**

WASHINGTON — Floodwaters in New Orleans contain bacteria associated with sewage that are at least 10 times higher than acceptable safety levels, making direct contact by rescue workers and remaining residents dangerous, the first government tests confirmed Wednesday.

Five deaths in Texas and Mississippi have already been attributed to contact with the toxic water, the CDC reported Wednesday, as New Orleans Mayor C. Ray Nagin ordered forced evacuations of residents remaining in the city. Though a large scale outbreak of infectious disease has yet to materialize, the health risks posed by the polluted water remained a top health concern.

"Human contact with the flood water should be avoided as much as possible," said Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Stephen L. Johnson.

Also found in the first round of testing were elevated lead levels, a risk if people, particularly children, were to drink the water.

Residents have been told since Hurricane Katrina to avoid drinking the water, but EPA's first tests -- which tracked levels of E. coli and other coliform bacteria that are a marker for sewage contamination -- emphasize a risk from skin contact as well. The bacteria can cause infections if people have cuts or other open wounds, or if the water is splashed into their mouths, noses or eyes.

The EPA didn't test how much sewage was in the water, but quit when analyses hit the 10-fold mark.

The first round of tests searched for more than 100 chemicals and other pollutants, but only coliform and lead so far exceeded EPA safety levels, the agency said.

But this was just a first test, of water in some residential neighborhoods, not industrial areas -- and didn't include tests for petroleum products because the of oil in the water is obvious, Johnson said.

"We don't know what else is contained in that water," he stressed, saying that daily samples from different parts of the city were being taken -- and that chemicals such as asbestos are likely to be in debris from older homes and businesses.

The health hazards from this water make it imperative that remaining residents comply with evacuation orders, said Dr. Julie Gerberding, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"If you haven't left the city yet, you must do so," she said.

Symptoms of *E. coli* ingestion are vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain and fever; anyone with those symptoms, or who has open wounds exposed to the dirty water, should seek medical attention.

Federal health officials stressed that rescue workers need to wear protective clothing and gloves before entering flooded areas, and that anyone who comes into contact with the dirty water should be careful not to splash it into their faces -- and to find clean water and soap to wash exposed skin, especially hands, as soon as possible.

"Always, always, always wash hands before eating," Gerberding stressed.

The five reported deaths appear to have been caused by *Vibrio vulnificus*, a germ common in warm Gulf Coast waters that's usually spread by eating contaminated food but that can penetrate open wounds, too. The four deaths reported Tuesday — one a hurricane refugee evacuated to Texas, the other three in Mississippi — were attributed to wound infections, said Tom Skinner, spokesman for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which received the reports from officials in the two states.

On Tuesday, officials in Houston's Astrodome handed out alcohol-based hand sanitizers Tuesday to help prevent spread of norovirus, an easily spread cause of diarrhea and vomiting. Officials isolated some refugees with the illness, made infamous by recent cruise-ship outbreaks, although they couldn't provide an exact count. There is no treatment except to keep sufferers hydrated; it normally lasts a few days.

Infection control within shelters housing thousands of evacuees is a top priority, said Dr. Julie Gerberding, the CDC director.

Wounds infected by submersion in New Orleans floodwaters tainted with raw sewage and other bacteria are common, however. Gerberding said Tuesday that another concern is whether those waters also were contaminated with toxic chemicals from hurricane damage to nearby factories.

Drinking water safety also is an issue in much of Mississippi and Louisiana and parts of Alabama, and the EPA sent a mobile laboratory to Mississippi Tuesday to help assess that. More than 1,000 drinking water systems in the three states were affected by the hurricane.

Officials maintain that there is little disease risk from exposure to dead bodies in the flooding — the corpses aren't infectious — or from agents not typically seen in this country, such as cholera.

Instead, doctors are being urged to watch for more likely causes of diarrheal illnesses: *E. coli* bacteria; the easy-to-spread noroviruses that, while seldom life-threatening, can

cause days of misery; or *Vibrio vulnificus*, cholera-like bacteria that every year kill more than a dozen Gulf Coast residents. The deaths reported Tuesday were among elderly people or those with weak immune systems, CDC's Skinner said.

But infection isn't the biggest medical challenge. It's how to care for thousands of people with chronic diseases like diabetes or kidney failure, many of them elderly patients who depend on numerous medications daily.

In Tupelo, Miss., for instance, city doctors brought sacks full of prescription drug samples to the Good Samaritan Clinic, where volunteer doctors are treating about 100 evacuees a day almost exclusively for chronic conditions, said Dr. J. Edward Hill, one of the volunteers and president of the American Medical Association.

FOX News medical contributor Dr. Manny Alvarez said that the destruction wrought by the storm would continue to pose a health threat long after the water was drained. The wetness left behind creates an environment for mold and bacteria to develop, he said.

The storm also destroyed the city's medical infrastructure, Alvarez warned, leaving residents without any facilities or resources that can provide them with health care.

"All of the health care structures in New Orleans and around New Orleans are devastated," he said. "A lot of these people got their clinical care at community health centers and mental health centers. All of that is gone."

Alvarez, who spent four days volunteering at a shelter in Baton Rouge, La., said that while the focus has been on treating acute patients, the larger crisis would be with people with chronic conditions who have not had their medications.

"This will be one of the greatest American health tragedies of the century," Alvarez said