

Event: Hurricane Katrina

Date: September 14, 2005

Situation: AVMA Hurricane Katrina Disaster Situation Report

AVMA Veterinary Medical Assistance Team (VMAT) Update:

VMAT-1: Louisiana

The Incident Commander, a public health service (PHS) veterinarian, in LA for animal issues is overseeing operations at the Lamar Dixon Equine Exhibition Center and the Parker Coliseum temporary animal shelter. There is an on-site Incident Commander (IC) at both locations and all activity should be coordinated through each IC at each location. Between PHS (now 20) and VMAT (40+), there are no additional needs for veterinarians at the time of this report.

VMAT- 1 has been tasked to St Bernard Parish to do assessments and has a presence at Plaquemine Parish and will continue working with the Pennsylvania DMAT which has replaced Hawaii DMAT at that site. The VMAT-1 Airport operation has shut down.

Lamar Dixon is shelter for approximately 1300 dogs, cats, and other animals. Parker Coliseum is shelter for approximately 1000 dogs, cats, and other animals.

VMAT 1 is in its second wave and 13 members will be demobilized in the next couple days and 12 new members will take their place.

VMAT-2: Mississippi

Operating in Gulfport, MS in conjunction with humane organizations to provide veterinary care for rescued animals. VMAT-2 is also supporting search and rescue/recovery dogs that are working on site.

VMAT-2 will meet with the Southern MS Veterinary Medical Association in the morning to continue to coordinate efforts to ensure VMAT-2 continues to work on behalf of the local veterinary profession. VMAT-2 is seeing between 50-70 animals a day, doing ambulatory calls, and continuing to assess local veterinary practices in the affected region.

VMAT-3: Mississippi

Dr. Kristen Hibbetts, VMAT-3 PIO

VMAT 3 continues to provide veterinary care in Hattiesburg and Waveland, MS. VMAT has processed over 650 companion animals and horses. All lost pets will be posted on www.petfinder.com.

The VMAT-3 field hospital is set up at the Multi-purpose Center (MPC) in Hattiesburg. Approximately 450 companion animals and horses are located at the Hattiesburg Animal Compound. The MPC buildings include sheds and horse stalls and the VMAT field hospital is located in one of the large buildings housing horses requiring medical treatment. The other open air buildings with stalls are being used by the humane society for dogs and cats housed in kennels.

VMAT-3 members, along with some VMAT-2 members are decontaminating between 125-150 animals each day. Their patients include both owned animals and rescued animals whose owners have not been identified as of yet. In addition, a VMAT-3 strike team in Hattiesburg medically treated 25 animals today including horses, dogs, and cats. A VMAT-3 strike team in Waveland treated 16 dogs, 3 cats, and 1 goose today. Animals that have survived are in remarkably good condition. So far VMAT-3 members have treated minor wounds and many previous conditions including ear mite and flea infestations. More serious injuries requiring medical treatment have included trauma resulting in fractured limbs, however the number of serious medical cases is so far very low. Very few animals have had to be euthanized by VMAT-3.

Every day truck loads of animals are rescued from the coast and brought to the MPC. VMAT members are tasked with decontamination of these animals and medical treatment as needed; the animals then go to the humane society to get scanned for microchips and cataloged so that they can be reunited with their owners.

VMAT-5: Louisiana

Garry G. Goemann, DVM, Team Commander, VMAT-5

In Gonzales, LA at the Lamar-Dixon Equine Exhibition Center where just under 3000 animals are being housed. Operations there have been reorganized and ICS is being implemented. At this time the number of animals entering Lamar-Dixon must equal the number of animals leaving in order to maintain a stable population.

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.

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

AVMA News:

AVMA Disaster Updates are available at www.avma.org/disaster

AVMA mounts preparedness, response to Katrina

A CNN correspondent, maneuvering through the streets of New Orleans by boat, reports a heartbreaking sight. A dog tangled in an electrical cord is alive but unreachable, and is slowly dying.

Like the human victims, untold numbers of animals were stranded and struggling to stay alive after Hurricane Katrina's Aug. 29 assault on the Gulf Coast.

The AVMA prepared for the disaster even before the hurricane made landfall as the highly trained AVMA Veterinary Medical Assistance Teams were put on alert and positioned in staging areas by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. For the first time, the government deployed all four VMATs in response to a disaster—two to Louisiana, two to Mississippi.

While the VMATs are providing critically needed services on-site around the clock, back at AVMA headquarters, the Association responded to the hurricane's aftermath by putting additional measures in place.

Foremost, the AVMA pledged half-a-million dollars in funds to match donations made to a new fund created by the American Veterinary Medical Foundation to provide relief for the animals and veterinarians affected by Hurricane Katrina (*see page 1041*).

The AVMA has also established an online Hurricane Recovery area, accessible from www.avma.org by clicking on "How you can help." Resources include information about making donations and volunteering, contacts for the AVMA insurance trusts, and daily disaster updates.

To assist displaced veterinary personnel, anyone interested in offering temporary employment and/or housing can e-mail the AVMA at vetcareers@avma.org or call Cindy Coy at (800) 248-2862, Ext. 6683, to be added to lists the AVMA is compiling. One's full name, phone number, and (if possible) e-mail address should be included in e-mails, and "Katrina" should be listed on the subject line.

Also of the essence, a call center has been activated at AVMA headquarters to coordinate and process a daily influx of phone calls from members and the public.

Since Katrina struck, the AVMA has been receiving an average 2,000 calls a day, double the usual number. Most of the disaster-related calls are animal rescue requests and inquiries about housing for displaced veterinarians, volunteering one's services, and making donations. The call center is responding with resources such as these:

- Animal rescue inquiries: in Louisiana—e-mail katrina@ldaf.louisiana.gov; in Mississippi—call (888) 722-3106; in Louisiana and Mississippi—call (800) HUMANE-1, e-mail outreach@aspca.org, or visit www.petfinder.com
- Housing: visit www.katrinahousing.org or www.fema.gov
- To join a VMAT, go to www.avma.org/disaster
- To potentially assist in Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts and future emergencies, e-mail EmergencyVMO@aphis.usda.gov with the subject line "New NAHERC Volunteer" to volunteer for the National Animal Health Emergency Response Corps coordinated by the Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. Veterinarians, veterinary technicians and assistants, and veterinary students are eligible to apply.

The Association is also working with other expert groups to produce animal and public health information for use by veterinarians, relief agencies, and pet owners, as well as background for the news media.

Government authorities started deploying the VMATs on Aug. 26-27, and by Sept. 2, all four teams were deployed. The teams moved from their staging areas into designated locations to begin making assessments under the direction of the state veterinarians.

Through the VMATs, the AVMA and AVMF provide the hands-on leadership needed in times of disaster. These teams of veterinarians, veterinary technicians, scientists, epidemiologists, toxicologists, and other medical and lay support personnel assist the

veterinary community in providing medical care for injured animals—including service dogs involved in rescue and recovery, coordinating animal relief efforts on-site, assessing the local veterinary infrastructure, and addressing public health issues.

In Louisiana, VMAT-1 and VMAT-5 had examined and/or treated 1,479 patients as of Sept. 8. At that time, they were stationed at the temporary animal shelter set up in Parker Coliseum at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, and in St. Bernard Parish, among other locations. The teams' assessments of 74 veterinary facilities and four Louisiana parishes were being compiled and evaluated. VMAT-1 has also provided animal care for more than 200 animals at the New Orleans airport and assisted VMAT-5 at the Lamar-Dixon Equine Exhibition Center in Gonzales, La., where the Louisiana SPCA set up an emergency animal rescue center.

In Mississippi, VMAT-2 was most recently at Gulfport stabilizing animal patients, and VMAT-3 was in Hattiesburg providing veterinary care. (There is no VMAT 4.) VMAT-2 set up a field hospital at Kessler Air Force Base to treat rescued animals.

Louisiana VMA president, Dr. Robert C. Gros, told AVMA, "My clinic and home were destroyed. Eighty to 100 veterinarians in New Orleans had their clinics flooded, and their homes were probably damaged if not destroyed. But everybody has an upbeat attitude, volunteering and helping."

Dr. Gros and LVMA Executive Director Bland O'Connor said they've been overwhelmed by the response from the public, suppliers and distributors, and veterinarians wanting to donate supplies or money or come out to help.

With the communications infrastructure down, it has been difficult for LVMA members to contact their association. Another immediate worry is that many animals still need to be evacuated, Dr. Gros said. "It will be a nightmare trying to coordinate getting the owners together with their pets. We're in desperate need here of anything that can be done monetarily or physically."

At the Louisiana State University campus in Baton Rouge, Dr. Dennis McCurnin is director of the Veterinary Teaching Hospital and Clinics for the School of Veterinary Medicine.

"Baton Rouge is essentially the hub now of New Orleans—we're the communications center, and we have now the Baton Rouge/New Orleans airport located here. All of this change has nearly doubled the population of Baton Rouge," he said.

The animal shelter in Parker Coliseum is on the main LSU campus, about half a mile from the veterinary school. Two or three veterinarians have been doing triage there. Animals needing more care or anesthesia are being transported to the veterinary school. Veterinarians and veterinary students are helping with the influx of animals, some at the teaching hospital, some at the coliseum, and some at the SPCA facility in Gonzales.

Dr. McCurnin said the overwhelming problem is heatstroke. "We're going through IV sets and fluids like there's no tomorrow."

He said there would be no quick fix for New Orleans, so the evacuees—human and animal—may be around for some time. "There is no New Orleans—it's gone, as we know it." He is concerned about the many strays being taken in for an undeterminable amount of time, when the local animal control facility is already full of adoptable animals.

And he is concerned about rabies, since he said only 5 percent of owned dogs in Orleans Parish are vaccinated.

In Mississippi, 85 percent of the veterinary clinics in the coastal counties were wiped out, according to Nancy Christiansen, administrative secretary of the state VMA. Exact numbers were not known. Storm damage was experienced as far north as Hattiesburg, which is 90 miles north of the coast and where at least one clinic was destroyed.

More than 360 veterinarians live and work in the affected area, Christiansen said. There have been no reports of death or serious injury among Mississippi VMA members, although many had lost homes and been displaced.

VMAT-2 and VMAT-3 are coordinating with the MVMA in assessing the veterinary needs in Gulfport and Hattiesburg, she said. Until the time when the local veterinary community is operational, those two VMATs will remain in Mississippi to supplement the efforts. Christiansen said the Humane Society of the United States has set up several animal shelters.

Christiansen is overwhelmed by the outpouring of public support. "We've had people offering not just supplies and money but jobs and places to live for people who are displaced," she said. "It's just amazing."

Many residents, primarily from Mississippi, evacuated and spread out into Alabama before the hurricane hit, according to Alabama VMA executive director, Dr. Charles Franz. That is not unusual before a hurricane, nor is it unusual for pet owners to take their animals to shelters or veterinary hospitals for housing before a storm hits. But this time, he said, many people can't return home, and the humane shelters and many clinics are full of animals. Dr. Franz said there are local efforts in cities such as Montgomery to help evacuees find temporary work.

The veterinary clinic closest to the coast in southern Mobile sustained substantial but repairable damage, and the animals were evacuated safely. Some other clinics in Alabama reported minor damage. Individuals, organizations, and industry have stepped up to donate a mosaic of support and resources to assist Katrina's animal victims and the veterinary community. Their offers of support include monetary donations, volunteering on-site, job and housing placement, transportation, and supplies. To tap into some of the organized efforts, log on to www.avma.org and click on "How you can help."

– Susan C. Kahler and R. Scott Nolen

Other Reports:

Humane Society of the United States:

For disaster updates: www.hsus.org

To report a pet needing rescue: 1-800-HUMANE-1

To Volunteer: <http://www.hsus.org>

From the CDC Director's Emergency Operation Center

P.M. Dispatch, September 12, 2005

Today's Top Messages:

Public health professionals remain concerned about mosquito control and health risks posed by other pests such as rodents in some areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. Spraying will begin today in the New Orleans area to kill adult mosquitoes that could carry the West Nile and other viruses.

Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease that can infect humans who come into contact with infected rodents and other animals, or when exposed to water contaminated with the urine of infected animals. People can reduce their risk of getting leptospirosis by avoiding contact with urine-contaminated water. The disease is not spread from person to person. www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/katrina/leptofaqs.asp

CDC is working closely with vaccine manufacturers to obtain needed supplies of key vaccines such as tetanus and hepatitis A, and developing additional vaccination plans for persons affected by Hurricane Katrina. For example, as influenza season approaches, influenza vaccination for persons staying in evacuation centers is warranted.

Update: Keep Food and Water Safe (new section on Cleaning and sanitizing food-contact surfaces) (translations in process of being updated)
www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/foodwater.asp

Lee M. Myers, DVM, MPH, Dipl. ACVPM

State Veterinarian

Assistant Commissioner of Animal Industry

Georgia Department of Agriculture

A Georgia State Agriculture Response Team (SART) was deployed to Hattiesburg, MS to assist with response and recovery. The team consists of four veterinarians, three livestock poultry specialists, one animal health technician, and four extension specialists from the GDA, USDA-APHIS-VS and the UGA. The team will be assisting the MS Emergency Management Operations Center (EMOC), staging area and field personnel with livestock and companion animal related issues. The State of Mississippi requested the SART team through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact agreement through the Georgia Emergency Management Agency.