

Event: Hurricane Katrina
Date: September 22, 2005
Situation: AVMA Hurricane Katrina Disaster Situation Report

AVMA Veterinary Medical Assistance Team (VMAT) Update:

VMAT-1: Louisiana and VMAT-5: Louisiana

I have been asked by the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) not to include VMAT-1 and VMAT-5 activities in this report. For information please call the NDMS 24-hour line at 800-872-6367 and ask for the ESF #8 Desk.

Thanks to the efforts of the veterinarians from the United States Public Health Service (PHS), I have the following update from CAPT William S. Stokes, PHS veterinarian and AVMA member.

Hurricane Katrina Veterinary Response: Louisiana

Tuesday, September 20, 2005

U.S. Public Health Service, LA Response

CAPT William S. Stokes, DVM

PHS Veterinary Team Leader;

Director, Animal Rescue and Shelter Branch,

Louisiana Animal Response Area Incident Command

Mission: To provide veterinary care for large and small animals, address carcass disposal issues, and address public health issues related to zoonotic diseases

Current status:

- The PHS Veterinary Team of 19 PHS veterinarians are currently providing veterinary support for the disaster theatre in support of the LA Animal Response Incident Command.
- Veterinary support continues for the 2 state coordinated emergency animal rescue shelters located at the Lamar Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales and the LSU Parker Coliseum in Baton Rouge. Working in conjunction with VMAT vets/technicians and USDA APHIS veterinarians.
- 24/7 veterinary staffing is being provided for acute and critical patient care, medical treatments, and preventive medicine at the two shelters
- Animal rescue efforts continue, with 290 animals received and triaged on 9/20 at the Gonzales shelter.
- Over 5000 animals have been rescued to date, including over 400 horses.
- Field rescue teams continue to recover live companion animals in the affected disaster areas from houses. Large numbers of stray dogs reported in some areas.
- No contagious disease outbreaks detected at either shelter.
- PHS Medical, Nursing, and (Emergency Health Officers) EHO Officers providing health and safety support for the two major shelters with established first aid stations
- Excessive ambient heat and humidity causing heat-related casualties and impaired work productivity

Accomplishments

- The Gonzales Triage Team conducted detailed medical examinations on 217 animals recovered from hurricane affected parishes (189 dogs, 28 cats).
- The Shelter Evacuation Team processed and exported 20 dogs for relocation in Georgia, and 53 cats to TN.
- PHS Medical staff at the two shelters continue to treat heat-related injuries, dog bites, cat scratches at Gonzales.
- Veterinary care provided for both shelters, with 337 patients

Critical Issues

- Adequate veterinary staffing continues to be a problem, and is exacerbated by the high temperatures. There is an ongoing critical need for veterinary technicians and trained animal handlers. (This need must be coordinated through the State Veterinarian's office via the Assistant State Veterinarian. Volunteers are highly discouraged from self deploying. It is very important to work within the Incident Command System.)

- Improvised animal shelters in downtown New Orleans continue to be of concern to the Health Department and Animal Control, especially with lack of veterinary processing and documentation of animals taken out of state.
- The large number of strays and increased rescue efforts are again resulting in greater number of animals coming into the shelter; the current shelter is now at capacity.

Changes/Needs in Resources

- Three veterinary officers are expected to arrive on 9/21-22. This is the first group of 6 expected out of 12 officers requested on the (Assistance Request - Federal) ARF.
- 10 veterinary officers will be rotating off deployment on 9/21.

Planned Activities

- Contingency planning for evacuation if Hurricane Rita becomes a threat are underway.
- A proposed site for a new shelter consists of a 45,000 square foot warehouse to provide shelter for about 300 dogs and other species for about 18 months. The costs will be covered by FEMA.
- PHS veterinarians will advise on animal containment and noise abatement systems as well as waste management for this identified shelter site.
- Continued in-processing and out-processing of animals from the Gonzales shelter
- Complete transition of staffing at both locations.
- Continue to address heat stress issues for humans and animals

VMAT-2: Mississippi

VMAT-2 has begun to mobilize to help the efforts in LA. Three team members are flying into Baton Rouge on 9/22 to augment the VMAT-1 efforts, with two additional VMAT-2 members to arrive on Sunday. Other team members are packed and ready to deploy to the area of need at any time.

VMAT-3: Mississippi

VMAT-3 is currently developing a transition and down-scaling plan. A full VMAT-3 operational contingency will remain in MS through Saturday. On Sunday Sept. 25th 12

VMAT-3 members will be demobilized. The State Veterinarian asked that VMAT-3 maintain a presence in MS through Oct. 1st, this request was approved by the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) a component of FEMA. 10 members of VMAT-3 will remain. The members will be broken into 2 strike teams; 1 five-person strike team will remain in Hattiesburg and the other 5-person strike team will replace the current Waveland, MS strike team.

The Waveland strike team will continue to triage animals in that location and coordinate transportation of those animals to the temporary shelter in Hattiesburg if needed.

Although exact numbers were not available at the time of this report, the animal population in Hattiesburg has not changed significantly. There are still approximately 800 dogs and cats, 25-35 horses, the pig population has grown to 4 pigs, there are approximately a half dozen goats and rabbits, a couple of Macaws and turtles, and some fish.

The current presenting medical cases are most frequently pre-existing conditions that were present prior to Hurricane Katrina. The trauma cases and the animals with severe injuries resulting from the hurricane were triaged and referred to local operational veterinary facilities and the college of veterinary medicine at Mississippi State University.

Walk-ins at the Hattiesburg shelter are referred back to their local veterinarians when it is possible to do so, in order to re-establish the local veterinary infrastructure. The first question VMAT members ask people entering the Hattiesburg shelter is, "who is your family veterinarian", if that hospital is operational, the person is asked to return to their own veterinarian as long as their pet is not in a life threatening situation.

The Hattiesburg shelter will most likely remain open until Oct. 15th. At that time the remaining animals will be shipped to foster homes and possibly adopted out. However, a huge effort is being made to locate the owners and reunite as many people with their pets as possible. (Please see hotline number below) The State Veterinarian will continue to assess the situation weekly, so this information is subject to change based upon those evaluations.

VMAT-3 is working with the State Veterinarian to secure public assistance grant money for various projects, including the hiring of displaced veterinarians to continue long-term veterinary support at various locations.

This completes the VMAT-3 operational update for 9/22/05.

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 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 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

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.

The VMAT efforts are made possible from an annual grant from the **American Veterinary Medical Foundation (AVMF)**. The AVMF just approved a \$100,000 grant to support immediate VMAT needs in the Hurricane Katrina Response. 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.

Texas Veterinary Medical Association

To post or search available veterinary jobs and housing...

TVMA CONNECT is a new online forum designed to enhance communication between members of the veterinary profession, especially during this time of need. To post information or get the latest updates concerning hurricane relief, visit www.tvmaconnect.org.

Mississippi Animal Relief Fund

(662) 324-9380

Through Mississippi Veterinary Medical Association

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

HSUS --1-800-HUMANE-1

The **LSU Emergency Animal Shelter in the Parker Coliseum** will not accept new pets after September 30, 2005 and the operation will close on October 15, 2005.

If possible, owners should pick up their animals by September 30 or give consent for adoption. If owners wish to give their pet up for adoption, they should call 225-578-6111; if owners wish to arrange for long-term fostering for their pet, they should come by the Parker Coliseum shelter or go to <http://www.petfinder.com>.

Pets remaining in the shelter after September 30, 2005, will be considered "abandoned." Some of these pets will be adopted out to new owners locally in Baton Rouge and remaining animals will be transported to shelters in other areas of the U.S. for subsequent adoption. All animals adopted out will be photographed for identification purposes and the image will be placed on Petfinder.com (<http://www.petfinder.com>). Records of transportation and adoption will be kept so that owners can trace down the location of their pets. All adoptions will be on a provisional basis for at least 30 days, allowing owners to reclaim their pets. For shelter news, visit the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine's web site (<http://www.vetmed.lsu.edu/>).