Temporary Sheltering: Companion Animal

The temporary sheltering of companion animal species may be needed for a variety of natural disaster situations. A number of factors must be addressed when setting up and operating these shelters.

Need for Shelter

- People evacuating with their pets
- Injured or displaced animals requiring rescue and sheltering until reunited with owners

Assessment and Planning

Location
- Out of the affected area
- Near human shelters
- Possible locations
  - Animal control or humane society shelters, veterinary hospitals, pet boarding facilities, dog training centers
  - Fairgrounds, school gyms, parking garage, warehouses

Facilities requirements
- Water source
- Adequate size
- Ventilation and climate control
- Waste disposal location
- Areas for animal segregation

Supplies
- Animal supplies: food, water, kennels, crates, collars, leashes, bowls, cat litter
- Medical supplies
- Cleaning supplies
- Office supplies

Security
- Limit unauthorized access
- Protect animals on-site
- Prevent pillage of stored supplies
- Manage controlled substances

Volunteer training and coordination
- Animal handling experience
- Pre-exposure rabies vaccination if possible
- Register all volunteers
- Training
  - Incident Command System
  - Animal handling
  - Personal protective equipment
  - Infection control procedures

Animal Arrival

- Every animal must have an identification number
  - Color-coded temporary identification collar around the animal’s neck
  - Matching colored band for owner
- Every animal must have a record sheet
  - Animal identification number
  - Complete description of animal – name (if known), sex, color, age, breed, scars, injuries, any identifying characteristics
  - Vaccination history, if known
    - All dogs, cats and ferrets must have a current rabies vaccination
  - Date brought into the shelter
  - If rescued animal, the location where found
- Rescued animals should be photographed
  - Place in book for owners to search
  - Only the animal’s identification number should be displayed with the photo
- All animals should be assessed and given a physical exam by a veterinarian
  - Scan rescued animals for a microchip
  - Treatments as needed:
    - Bathing, first aid, oxygen, internal and external parasites, vaccinations
    - Injuries or illness
- Housing
  - Each animal should have its own housing large enough for food dishes, standing, lying down; litter box for cats
  - Housing areas should be located in area that is easy to clean and disinfect
  - Position cages with limited view of other animals to minimize stress
  - Segregate animals by species and age
- Animal Management
  - Dogs must be walked at least twice a day
  - Set up designated walking areas with plastic bags for feces pickup and disposal
  - Record daily actions on animals record sheet
    - Food, water, walks, medication
  - When possible, pet owners should assume the responsibility for the care of their animal
Handling
- Animal behavior can be abnormal in times of stress
- Proper handling can minimize stress and decrease the risk of injury to the volunteer
  - All volunteers should receive training
- Any known, highly aggressive animal should only be handled by experienced personnel. Signage should be placed on the cages of these animals
- Report all animal bites and scratches

Infection Control
- Isolation area (see below)
- Sanitation and waste management
  - Daily waste removal and disposal
  - Daily cleaning and disinfection

Veterinary Care and Involvement
- Incoming animals need to be thoroughly examined
- Daily visual health checks should be performed
- Isolation of Sick Animals
  - A separate area for sick or exposed animals should be set up
  - Animals showing illness should immediately be examined by a veterinarian
  - Any confirmed diseases should be reported to the Incident Command Structure
  - Information on the disease, along with any precautionary measures for handling the animal should be placed on the animal’s cage
  - The number of individuals caring for animals in the isolation area should be limited to only those necessary for direct care
  - Protective clothing should be worn and then removed before leaving the isolation area

Additional Resources

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