



# Animal Welfare:

## Equine

During animal health emergency situations – whether a natural disaster or infectious disease outbreak response – animal welfare issues must be considered and addressed. This handout overviews some of the pertinent animal welfare considerations for equine during animal health emergencies.

### Animal Welfare

Animal welfare is the ethical responsibility of ensuring the well-being of animals. It refers to the physical and mental state of the animal and includes consideration of the animal's health, behavior, and biological function.

**Animal welfare plans need to be continuously evaluated and refined**

### The Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare

The internationally recognized ideal states of welfare, can provide valuable guidance and a framework for determining and assessing animal welfare situations.

- **Freedom from hunger and thirst**
  - Providing ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain health and vigor
- **Freedom from discomfort**
  - Providing appropriate environment, including shelter and a comfortable resting area
- **Freedom from pain, injuries, or illness**
  - Providing disease preventive measures or rapid diagnosis and treatment
- **Freedom to express normal behavior**
  - Providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind
- **Freedom from fear and distress**
  - Ensuring conditions and treatment which avoids mental suffering

### Freedom from Hunger and Thirst

- **Water:** 5 gallons water/1000 pound animal
- **Feed**
  - 1-2% of body weight
  - Hay or grass pastures
  - Possibly grain
- **Monitor all feed and water intake**

### Freedom From Discomfort

- **Appropriately sized confinement space**
  - Stalls or outdoor pens
  - Protection from elements
  - Appropriate temperature for time of year
  - Ventilation
- **Bedding**
  - Saw dust, wood chips, straw
- **Waste management**

### Freedom From Pain, Injury, Disease

- **Veterinary examination upon entry/exit**
  - Illness
  - Injury
  - Nutritional well-being
- **Treat appropriately**
  - Medical, surgical
  - Humane euthanasia
- **Monitor daily**
- **May have delay in showing signs**
  - Stress analgesia

### Freedom To Express Normal Behavior

- **Herd animals**
  - Social nature
  - Stressed if separated from herd mates
- **Separate animals based on**
  - Farm of origin
  - Gender
  - Pregnant mares, mare and foals

### Freedom From Fear and Distress

- **Elevated stress**
  - Stressed animals are unpredictable
  - Experienced handlers needed
- **Safe transport**
  - Avoid overcrowding
  - Keep animals in familiar groups

## Responders Mental Health and Animal Welfare

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- **Response stress can affect mental health of responders**
- **May affect animals welfare**
  - Responder apathy
  - Responder fatigue
  - Uncompleted tasks
  - Carelessness of tasks
  - Forgetting overall welfare needs

## Additional Resources

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- American Veterinary Medical Association. The veterinarian's role in animal welfare at [www.avma.org/products/animal\\_welfare/welfare.pdf](http://www.avma.org/products/animal_welfare/welfare.pdf)
- AVMA Guidelines on Euthanasia [www.avma.org/issues/animal\\_welfare/euthanasia.pdf](http://www.avma.org/issues/animal_welfare/euthanasia.pdf)
- USDA Animal Welfare Information Center <http://awic.nal.usda.gov>
- OIE Animal Welfare Guidelines. Terrestrial Animal Health Code [www.oie.int](http://www.oie.int)
- American College of Animal Welfare [www.acaw.org](http://www.acaw.org)

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