


Handling Conflict

During an
Animal Health Emergency




Conflict Situations

- Angry
- Fearful
- Distraught
- Different backgrounds, values, beliefs
- Anti-government or anti-authority
- Non-cooperative
- Belligerent
- Threatening

Before a Site Visit

- Learn about the owner
 - What is the nature of the person?
 - What is their expected behavior?
 - Is there a real or perceived threat?
 - Are there any generation or cultural issues?



Before a Site Visit


- Tap into local knowledge/acquaintances
 - Friend or neighbor
 - Local veterinarian, industry rep
 - Community leader
- Consider having the acquaintance to come along if it will help diffuse the situation

Heading to the Site

- Avoid going alone
 - Travel in teams or with a partner
 - Call-in schedule
- Carry a cell phone at all times


Upon Arrival

- Professional and respectful
 - Introduce/identify yourself
 - Establish trust
- Explain purpose of visit
 - Why you are there
 - Explain necessity of visit
 - Provide background of the situation
- Express empathy for situation
 - The situation is hard for owner
- Express goal to work cooperatively



During the Visit

- Conflict often due to misunderstanding
- Listen and address owners concerns and questions
 - Listen without interrupting
 - Have a clear understanding of the concern



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During the Visit

- Do not blame, judge or accuse
- Focus on issue and goal of action
- Be aware of nonverbal communication
 - Posture, facial expressions, eye contact, hand gestures

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During the Visit

- Be aware of your surroundings at all times
 - Conflict situations can escalate quickly; often without warning
- Watch for any security or safety concerns
 - Personal safety is always a first priority
- Watch for changes in behavior, language or posture

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If You Are Threatened

- Remain calm
- Leave immediately
- Do not elevate the situation or put your safety at risk
- Contact your supervisor immediately
- Some situations may require law enforcement

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Following an Incident

- Document the situation
- Provide detailed information
- Forward the information to your supervisor



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Strategies for Communication

- Focus on the issue
- Accept/respect opinions may differ
- Don't force compliance
- Work to develop common agreement
- If not possible, discuss situation with supervisor
- Formal training prior to the response

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Resources

- **Effective Communication**
<https://training.fema.gov/emiweb/downloads/is242.pdf>
- **Conflict Resolution Skills**
<http://www.edcc.edu/counseling/documents/Conflict.pdf>
- **Conflict Resolution**
http://www.wfm.noaa.gov/workplace/ConflictResolution_Handout_3.pdf

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