Dear NASAAEP Colleagues,

When the Preparedness & Community Outreach Best Practice Working Group (PCOWG) convened for the first time at the NASAAEP Summit Meeting in Kansas City in December 2009, we found it necessary to first ask ourselves some defining questions: “What problem are we trying to solve?” “What is our scope?” and “Who are our audiences?” In working to achieve consensus in the answers to these questions, we set the parameters for what would eventually become our work product, this White Paper.

This document discusses how to develop appropriate messaging content, why message delivery can be just as important as its content, how messaging can be delivered and by whom, and who should be the recipients and why.

Early on, Working Group member Tracey Stevens perhaps stated the objective best when she summarized why messaging is important. By the distribution of appropriate information an “expanding collaboration between multiple organizations and individuals will further response and readiness, and create safer, more resilient communities.” In other words, the dissemination of appropriate information in a timely manner makes preparedness and response more effective, safer and better.

In keeping with the NASAAEP vision, the working group has attempted to identify the critical mission-specific best practices related to one key animal emergency support task: communication. The result remains a work in progress and we welcome your input to improve it further in the months and years ahead. We hope you will find this White Paper thought provoking and a starting point with which to develop your organization’s preparedness and outreach communications plan.

Thank you to all members of this working group for their time, energy and creativity in contributing to this White Paper. We expect it will continue to be refined in the future. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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Introduction

All hazard animal preparedness is a critical component of animal response. The more citizens are prepared to take care of themselves and their animals during an emergency event, the greater the ability of disaster responders to target critical community resources to help those who have special needs or are more severely impacted by the disaster.

It is crucial to understand that “one size does NOT fit all” when it comes to preparedness messaging. Likewise, how the message can be effectively communicated can vary depending on your target population.

This paper will provide general guidance for the preparation of materials for community outreach and ideas to consider when developing a strategy for the delivery of your message.

Embrace a “Whole Community” Approach

As the effects of natural and man-made disasters become more rapid, far-reaching, and wide-spread, government at all levels must grapple with the limitations of its capabilities. The simple reality is that in small and medium sized disasters, government can expand its reach and deliver services more efficiently and cost effectively by partnering with institutions, groups and individuals already active in the impacted communities. And in large scale disasters, the needs of survivors will outweigh the collective resources and capabilities that government at all levels can bring to bear. Government can no longer assume that it can solve disaster management challenges on its own, and how effectively government at every level engages with and leverages the resources of other segments of society will determine how successful the nation’s response is, as a whole.

At the same time, experience has taught us that we must do a better job of providing services for the entire community, regardless of their background, demographics, or challenges. This means planning for the actual makeup of a community, making sure we meet the needs of every disaster survivor regardless of age, economics, or accessibility requirements.

Addressing these related concerns cannot be achieved by simply improving on what we have always done – we must fundamentally change how we go about disaster preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation, involving the communities we serve directly in these efforts. We must look beyond the traditional, “government-centric” approach to emergency management and embrace a philosophy and operational posture that leverages, and serves, the Whole Community.

Whole Community emergency management:
  - understands and meets the needs of the whole community;
  - engages all aspects of the community (public, private, and civic) in defining those needs and devising ways to meet them; and
- strengthens what works well in communities on a daily basis to improve resilience and emergency management outcomes.

As communities are made up of many distinct audiences, it will be important to solicit input and ideas on how to encourage sustained community participation and involvement in preparedness and resilience at all levels, including animal preparedness. Critical to this outreach is:

- Leveraging existing relationships and networks
- Reaching out and communicating through trusted sources
- Understanding and being receptive to community needs
- Offering tangible benefits that address a genuine need
- Legitimizing and recognizing communities capabilities
- Empowering people to act

For more information on “Whole Community” visit http://www.emforum.org/vforum/FEMA/Resilience.pdf

How to Develop Content for Messaging

Before you start developing your message, consider your audience, what you are trying to communicate, desired behaviors/outcomes, and possible methods for delivering message (see “Methods of Delivery”). Evaluate whether any existing materials will serve the purpose (see “Resources”). If you wish to create your own piece, follow the “Prepare Your Own Outreach Materials” checklist. Whether you use new materials or existing materials, consider comparing the products against the checklist.

Caution: Many commercially available preparedness materials do not contain appropriate messaging regarding animals. If you use these as part of the overall preparedness outreach, consider amending language to reflect your jurisdiction's emergency plan for animals.

Preparing Your Own Outreach Materials Checklist

Consider Your Audience

Consider the audience you want to reach. You might have separate messages for collaborating emergency managers, veterinary professionals and the public.

- Who do you want your message to reach? Is your audience mixed in terms of ages, ethnicities, education levels and income? Are you reaching those who cannot self-evacuate as well as those who can? You may have separate messages for different audiences. For example, messages to children will be different than messages to adults, yet key points may reach children's parents more effectively than products marketed to adults.

- Is the message linguistically/culturally/geographically clear and appropriate? The message needs to be context-specific. Can you invite a native speaker(s) and others from the target
community to review the product? For example, not all Spanish speakers share the same
culture and language. Try to engage the local ethnic community for help in reviewing
translation.

- Does the message tell who is responsible for providing support? Does it clearly
  communicate who to contact for more help and when? Who is responsible for what
  portions of the emergency plan(s)?

- How will your message content encourage citizens to comply? What are the incentives for
  compliance, and are the incentives well-stated?

- Does the message cover the right area (geographically) that might have the problem?
  There are areas in every jurisdiction that have recurring emergencies. For example, coastal
  areas in your jurisdiction will have different messaging needs from desert/arid areas.

**Consider Your Content**

- What are the key points for your message? Does your content convey your message
  clearly? (Who, what, where, when and how?)

- What are the actions you’d like taken after reading your materials?

- Does the message address most likely disasters? Does the material speak to risks common
to your area?

- Does the message provide sources for more information? Is it clear who to contact for
  more help?

- Does your message offer options? What if the top recommendations are not good options
  for all of your audience? What if your message fails?

- Are the facts presented in your message really facts? Can they be documented? Are you
  conveying the most current and accurate information at the appropriate level of detail?

- Does your message provide an appropriate timeline (72 hours versus 7 days)? Are there
timelines for different types of events? For example, tornados and fires move more quickly
  than hurricanes.

- Does the message define success? What is the intended end result for your
  communication at both the individual and the jurisdictional level? For example, are you
  trying to increase self-evacuation by a certain percentage since your last disaster?

- What is an appropriate starting point in developing your message? Remember that there
  are many materials already available. It may be more efficient to use another jurisdiction's
materials as a starting point.

➢ Do your materials describe simply how individuals can gather supplies for their animal “to go” kits? Are there suggestions on where to find off-the-shelf kits?

➢ Is your message achievable? Will people be able to follow your instructions?

**Content – Specific Considerations**

➢ Ensure that your jurisdiction’s animal response plan reflects current best practice and is an effective model. For example, does your community shelter in place, do you recommend the use of surrogate caretakers, or do you co-located companion animal shelters with human shelters?

➢ Does your plan offer every day, accessible options for people? For example, can an animal be evacuated in a pillowcase?

➢ Consider other animals in addition to companion animals, such as horses and other “barnyard pets.” Do you provide messages on having a plan for them? Does the message encourage practicing the plan? For example, will your horse get into a trailer?

➢ Does your message make recommendations on what to include in a 72 hour kit for companion animals or livestock? The list can be basic or more elaborate (see attached list). Consider your audience and whether they’re likely to prepare a kit or not. If not, keep it simple.

➢ Does your message explain clearly the difference between “shelter in place” and leaving your animals behind? Your audience needs to understand that companion animals should be evacuated along with people and that sheltering in place occurs when people are directed to do so. Simply put, companion animals follow their owners.

➢ Does your message make recommendations for methods of evacuation? Are companion animals allowed on public buses/transportation in your jurisdiction’s emergency plan? If so, say so! List any requirements, such as animals must be on leash or in a carrier.

➢ Do you provide recommendations for places to go if evacuation is required? If possible, list hotels and boarding facilities in your jurisdiction that welcome companion animals.

➢ Consider breaking out information by (1) what to do to prepare before the emergency and (2) what to do at the time of the emergency.
Delivery of Your Message

Conduct A Needs Assessment

Effective delivery of your all hazard animal preparedness message to your target population(s) is necessary and important and should be promoted as part of overall personal preparedness. By engaging diverse community members in your planning process you will have additional personnel and resources for getting out your message. Collaboration between multiple organizations and individuals will further response, readiness and creates safer, more resilient communities. There are consequences for not providing a clear and relevant message to each of your target populations. Most importantly, people will not know how to respond during an emergency.

There are a variety of social media and resources for delivering your message. To determine which strategies will work best, it is important to identify who lives in your jurisdiction and to assess what method of communication works best. Take into consideration racial, ethnic, economic, cultural and geographic differences. Think about those individuals who are least likely to prepare for the events most likely to happen in your jurisdiction. Look at cultural values regarding animal care and ownership. Who are those populations most likely to miss your message (the homeless, people with low incomes, limited English speakers, people with disabilities, the elderly)? By taking all these factors into consideration you can better tailor your outreach materials and delivery approach.

Use Community Partnerships to Share Your Message

In order to effectively deliver the message of all hazard animal preparedness, recognize that there are many audiences. Successful communication will require that relationships are built with your target populations’ trusted community partners to craft and target messages that have meaning and relevance.

Once the message has been developed, identify what target population(s) you want to reach. Jurisdictions have unique characteristics. Distinct communities (racial, ethnic, cultural, economic, geographic) within the jurisdiction need to be recognized and outreach methods tailored to each. Identify trusted community partners that are connected to these communities. Each partner will be unique in the services they provide and the clients they serve. Your outreach methodology needs to take this into account.

Consider the following partners when developing your outreach strategy. Be sure to include on-going guidance to your partners to assure preparedness messages are shared on a regular basis.
1. Reach out to businesses and organizations that serve animals and their owners - veterinary clinics, animal shelters, livestock associations, pet stores, kennels, Cooperative Extension, equine boarding facilities, etc. - and encourage them to educate their clientele on animal preparedness and to develop a business preparedness plan for animals in their care.

2. Recruit organizations traditionally engaged in large scale disaster planning and response such as local emergency management agencies and fire departments. Other potential partners include citizen preparedness and response groups such as Citizen Corps, Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), State and Community/County Animal Response Teams (SART/CART), State Departments of Agriculture, Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) and Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD). The most localized will be able to identify the target population's needs and provide opportunities for outreach. Remember that those involved with the human services sector of disaster should recognize that animal response is part of human response. People's behavior will be impacted by the options available for their animals.

3. Look to organizations that are not traditionally animal or emergency management groups. These will often have the greatest influence on reaching your target population. They can include grassroots organizations, human service providers, community/economic development organizations, civic and cultural groups, faith-based organizations, schools, small business leaders and local churches. Engage them as partners in your planning and outreach processes. These organizations are good resources for determining target population(s), who the leaders are and who is most trusted.

There are many methods available for effectively delivering the all hazards animal preparedness message. Media such as television news, newspaper, radio, and newsprint, as well as community fairs, individual organization meetings, libraries, direct mailings included in billing or elected officials outreach mailings are all viable and sometimes free methods of outreach delivery. Use your community partners to gain a better understanding of what will work best for your target population. The type of outreach material will depend on the culture, tradition and values of the target population. Respecting and recognizing those unique aspects will help build a successful outreach campaign.

Feedback and evaluation should be done on an ongoing basis by meeting with the community leaders as well as tracking the results of outreach activities and outcomes and evaluating comments and feedback. Adjustments to methodology and types of materials can then be made. Surveys and focus groups are a good opportunity for determining the usability of materials and tracking results in the target population(s). Community partners will not only provide a venue for delivery of the message but will provide the target population with assistance whenever possible. Keep your community partners informed and involved in the process and they will lead the way toward improved community preparedness.
How Do We Fund Our Animal Preparedness Activities?

Your greatest chance of funding your activities comes from a creative, multi-faceted approach. There are three primary types of financial resources: government, private foundation/non-profit and corporate.

1. Local, state and federal governments are responsible for considering household pets in emergency plans (link to PETS Act and PKEMRA). Thus animal preparedness and community outreach are recognized as legitimate activities in emergency preparedness. Reach out to officials in your state or territory to learn how funding opportunities work. To learn who they are, visit http://www.ready.gov/america. Ask about the following programs and what funding opportunities might be available to support your activities:

   - Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) http://www.fema.gov/government/grant/hsgp/index.shtm
     - State Homeland Security Program (SHSP)
     - Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI)
     - Citizen Corps Program (CCP)

A Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov/HomePage, Fire Corps http://www.firecorps.org/page/628/About_Us.htm, and/or Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/ may be operating in your community. The Citizen Corps programs support community preparedness outreach and activities. Develop partnerships with these groups to communicate your animal preparedness messages.

The United States Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (USDA-APHIS) Animal Care program is charged with providing technical assistance and subject matter expertise on the safety and well-being of household pets during disasters. In advance of an emergency, this means facilitating household pet emergency management discussions among Federal, State, territorial, tribal, and local governments, as well as nongovernmental organizations, as they develop and exercise disaster response plans. http://www.aphis.usda.gov/emergency_response/pet.shtml

Check with your state animal and agricultural programs for possible financial and material resources. A list of these organizations may be found at www.nasaaep.org.

2. Private foundations and non-profit organizations with interest in animal welfare may have funds available for animal preparedness activities. Some are specific to certain states or localities and others are national in scope.
3. Corporations engaged in animal care may support animal preparedness activities. Look to local business and national chains that are operating in your community.

**What Other Resources are Available?**

The National Animal Rescue and Sheltering Coalition (NARSC) is a collaboration of the major national animal protection organizations in the United States. Participants in the Coalition include the most experienced, qualified animal rescue and sheltering management professionals in the country. Many of the member organizations have developed animal preparedness materials that can be used to support your local efforts. [http://www.narsc.net/about/](http://www.narsc.net/about/)

The American Red Cross has developed pet preparedness materials and your local chapter can be a partner in getting out the message. While Red Cross shelters do not accept animals, they are a strong partner in community preparedness activities- including activities involving animals. [http://www.redcross.org/portal/site/en/menuitem.d8aefc214c576bf971e4cfe43181aa0/?vgnextoid=7ca20c45f663b110VgnVCM10000089f0870aRCRD](http://www.redcross.org/portal/site/en/menuitem.d8aefc214c576bf971e4cfe43181aa0/?vgnextoid=7ca20c45f663b110VgnVCM10000089f0870aRCRD)

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has disaster preparedness materials available. [http://www.avma.org/disaster/default.asp](http://www.avma.org/disaster/default.asp) Also contact your local and state veterinary medical associations for opportunities.

**What Are Some Good Strategies For Requesting Funds?**

1. Understand the goals of the program from which you are seeking funds.
2. Learn where your activities fit into the program- focus on those that seek to improve citizen preparedness.
3. Be sure your group is eligible to apply for funds. If not, see if there are partnerships you can build with eligible organizations to access funds.
4. Integrate animal preparedness into general citizen preparedness activities by become a part of an existing community preparedness group.
5. Partner with groups that are connected to your target population (community organizations, faith-based institutions, local emergency preparedness and response) to make your funding request stronger.

**Examples of Preparedness Literature**

- Local/State resources on all-hazard animal preparedness such as:
  - [http://www.floridadisaster.org/petplan.htm](http://www.floridadisaster.org/petplan.htm)
• United States Department of Homeland Security  
  http://www.ready.gov/america/getakit/pets.html

• Federal Emergency Management Agency  
  http://www.fema.gov/plan/prepare/animals.shtm#1

• United States Centers for Disease Control  
  http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/petprotect.asp

• American Red Cross  
  http://www.redcross.org/portal/site/en/menuitem.86f46a12f382290517a8f210b80f78a0/?vgnextoid=7d4994eeef052210VgnVCM10000089f0870aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default

• American Veterinarian Medical Association  
  http://www.avma.org/disaster/

• National Animal Rescue and Shelter Coalition  
  http://www.narsc.net/about/

• American Humane Association  
  http://www.americanhumane.org/animals/programs/emergency-services/community-preparedness/

• The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals  
  http://www.aspca.org/pet-care/disaster-preparedness/

Criteria for Evaluating Literature

1. Current – Does the material meet national, state and local emergency planning?
2. Relevant – Does the material match local risks?
3. Accessible – Is the material available in electronic and print? Is it easy to read?
4. Accurate - Does it reflect current best practice?
5. Complete – Does the material provided cover evacuation to return?
6. Concise – Is the detail level appropriate? Remember less is generally more.
7. Achievability – Does the material meet your expectation?
8. No Cost – Available for free download or postal delivery.
Conclusion

Selection of appropriate messaging content can be just as important as how a message is delivered. Some messages should be tailored to specific audiences. And selection of the audiences to receive our messages is also important. Hopefully, with the help of this White Paper as a guide, successful and effective community outreach will serve to improve response and readiness, and create safer, more resilient communities.

Are you ready?