

# **County of Plumas**

## **Emergency Operations Plan**

### **Functional Annex A - Animals**

## **Shelter Operations Plan**

### **Introduction**

In disasters, the first priority is the protection of life, property and the environment. Although the protection of human life is the highest priority in an emergency response, recent disasters and follow-up research have shown that proper preparation and effective coordination of animal issues enhance the ability of emergency personnel to protect both human and animal health and safety.

The Plumas County Animal Annex is intended as a guide for emergency staff to perform the critical field response support for the safe evacuation and sheltering of animals during a disaster. The plan outlines the procedures to organize qualified teams of volunteers to transport animals to an area that is safe and meets the animal's sheltering needs.

Ultimately, owners of horses, livestock and pets are responsible for their animal's evacuation and sheltering needs. For this reason, a disaster preparedness section is included in this plan. Animal owners should realize that they may not receive immediate government assistance during a disaster and may be on their own to provide for themselves and protect their property and animals.

This Annex is used in conjunction with the Emergency Operations Plan. The Annex contains current contact information mentioned in this annex. The information is confidential and will only be used by emergency staff during training exercises and an actual disaster.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **A. All Affected Agencies**

1. Prepare and maintain Standard Operating Procedures and functional checklists for animal care response to a disaster or emergency, including a system for automatic reporting of pre-designated personnel to assigned disaster posts.
2. Train personnel and alternates.
3. Maintain an active liaison with the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the California Animal Rescue Emergency Services (CARES) and other public animal care agencies.

**B. Plumas County Animal Control, under the supervision of the Sheriff's Administrative Sergeant**

**Animal Control Officer or designee**

The Animal Control Officer or designee reports to the Plumas County Sheriff or their designee and is responsible for directing emergency animal care/control operations within the unincorporated area of Plumas County as well as the City of Portola and is responsible for coordinating emergency operations if one or more jurisdictions are involved. Animal Control shall maintain open communications with fire services, law enforcement, other animal services agencies, and public and private shelter representatives.

1. Shall develop, maintain, and exercise the Animal Control SOP.
2. Shall develop and organize a system to identify and track animals received during a disaster.
3. Shall develop criteria establishing County-Wide holding time and euthanasia standards for implementation during a disaster.
4. Shall write and update the Animal Control SOP and Mutual Aid Agreement.
5. Shall direct disaster animal care operations within the unincorporated areas of Plumas County and the City of Portola.
6. Shall assist with the coordination of training and plan the development of exercises with other animal related agencies.
7. Shall respond to requests for aid to other regions for mutual aid upon request, if possible.
8. Shall assist in the development of a resource directory for animal care.
9. Shall maintain a liaison with the coordinators of other emergency functions such as fire and rescue, law enforcement, health, care and shelter and the Office of Emergency Services.
10. Shall maintain a liaison with the Red Cross, volunteer agencies, and other representatives within the region. Provide staffing to assist with animal related issues within these groups.
11. Coordinate the transportation of animals to animal care facilities within its jurisdiction and to other areas as requested, when available.

**C. Office of Emergency Services (OES)**

1. Shall provide a liaison to the Plumas County Animal Control

2. Shall assist in obtaining necessary resources through the Emergency Operations Center.

## **State, County, Non-Profit and Private Sector Support**

In accordance with SEMS, local authorities maintain control of disaster response and recovery operations. Assistance may come from other local governments, state, and federal governments, non-profits and the private sector. However, all efforts within the Operational Area (OPS) remain under the direction of the Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES).

The California Animal Response Emergency System (CARES) will coordinate resources and decisions once a disaster escalates to a state-level emergency. When Plumas County (County) has exhausted its resources, County OES will request aid through the Regional Emergency Operations Center (REOC). State agencies participating in CARES may be called on for assistance when local resources are depleted and no further mutual aid from other Operational Areas is available.

County and local government support to assist with animals is as follows:

- Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES)
- Plumas County Animal Control (Animal Control)
- Plumas County Department of Agriculture, Weights & Measures (Ag Department)
- Plumas County Sheriff's Department
- Volunteer Fire and Rescue Departments, if not engaged in an incident

Volunteer and Non-Profits to contact for assistance are as follows:

- High Mountain Riders
- Indian Valley Riding and Roping Club
- Plumas County American Red Cross
- Plumas County Horseman's Association
- Plumas County Residents
- Plumas County Search and Rescue (Escorts only if not engaged in an incident.)
- Plumas Livestock Evacuation Team
- California Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA)

Private Sector Groups that may be willing to assist are as follows:

- Cattleman's Association
- Farm and Ranch Guilds

- Plumas-Sierra Farm Bureau
- Animal Transporters
- Pet and Food Supply Businesses
- Commercial Animal Industries (breeders, stables, kennels)
- Home owners
- Rendering Companies

## **California Animal Response Emergency System (CARES)**

California Office of Emergency Services (OES) and the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) developed CARES to coordinate resources and decisions once local governments and the county exhaust their resources. The CARES Plan identifies state-level resources and the means by which these resources can be made available to help local government with animal issues during a disaster. The CARES participants will activate and respond to animal rescue, care and shelter, veterinary care and general assistance for animals.

County Office of Emergency Services (OPS) will contact the Regional Emergency Operations Center who will then coordinate with CDFA to identify and approve requested resources. This is all part of the response strategies of CARES as organized within the structure of SEMS.

## **Volunteers**

Plumas County has identified volunteers and shelter locations for pets, horses and other large animals in the event of an emergency animal evacuation. These volunteers are members of the community who are qualified to operate animal transportation vehicles and handle horses and other large animals. Other volunteers may be used to assist with unskilled activities such as feeding, record keeping, organizing donations, answering phones and delivering messages. Qualified volunteers have been pre-registered with Plumas County as Disaster Service Workers. Additional volunteers who assist with sheltering animals during a disaster must register with Plumas County as Disaster Service Workers at the time of any emergency.

Volunteer registration will take place as designated by the Plumas County Sheriff's Office or the Office of Emergency Services, depending on the nature of the disaster. Disaster Service Worker registration consists of:

- Completion of volunteer registration EVC Form 1.
- Confirmation that the volunteer possesses the skills and expertise to handle large animals. If none, they may qualify to assist with other tasks.
- Administration of the Disaster Service Worker Loyalty Oath on EVC Form 2.
- Compliance with SEMS guidelines outlined in Plumas County's Emergency Operations Plan on the use of volunteers.

- Issuance an Emergency Responder Identification card signed by the Director of Emergency Services, Sheriff's Department, or other competent authority in the EOC.

**Note:** Mutual aid volunteers registered as DSWs in other jurisdictions are not required to be sworn in and registered with Plumas County if responding to a mutual aid request via OES. Volunteers activated by County OES responding from outside agencies through mutual aid requests must adhere to the County's Policy regarding their safety.

Plumas County's Animal Evacuation Policy is that:

- Human safety shall outweigh any animal evacuation effort.
- All volunteers must have a reliable means of communicating with the Emergency Operations Center.
- Volunteers shall only perform actions consistent with their skills, abilities and equipment.
- Volunteers shall not impede the efforts of first responder personnel and equipment.
- Volunteers shall not engage in any evacuation effort without the benefit of workers' compensation.
- Volunteers must be activated by the County emergency staff to qualify for workers' compensation.

Mutual aid requests for animal evacuation volunteers registered with the County may originate from County OES or a neighboring agency. A request for the County's volunteers shall receive the approval of the County's Director of Emergency Services or other supervising authority in the EOC. The County shall follow SEMS guidelines when requesting mutual aid from other jurisdictions. Volunteers from other agencies must be registered by the responding agency as Disaster Service Workers specialized in the handling and transportation of large animals. These volunteers should have identification listing their assignment and Disaster Service Worker status.

The contact list for qualified and registered volunteers is in this annex of the Emergency Operations Guide maintained in the County's Emergency Operations Center and Alternate EOC. This information is confidential and only may be used by emergency staff during actual emergencies or training exercises.

Volunteers working animal evacuations and shelter sites receive supervision from the director or emergency coordinator and, if present, Animal Control staff assigned to an animal shelter. In order for DSWs to be eligible for workers' compensation, they must be under the supervision of the County's emergency staff.

## **Care and Shelter Locations**

Plumas County has identified locations within the County suitable for sheltering animals on an emergency basis. The Emergency Operations Plan contains the list of locations, types of animals that can be sheltered and the capacity of the shelters. The primary small animal shelter will be located at Plumas Animal Control with the Plumas-Sierra County Fairgrounds as an alternate site. The primary large animal shelter will be at the Plumas-Sierra County Fairgrounds. The Ag Department will serve as a task force under Animal Control as the support unit for the large animal shelter.

The following guidelines should be used when determining any shelter location during a disaster:

- Sites are upwind, upstream and away from any potential threat.
- Sites have water and electricity.
- Sites have adequate safety measures to separate various types of animals.
- Sites have adequate ingress and egress for wide trailers and large vehicles.
- Sites have a safe and clear route leading from the point of evacuation.
- Sites have escape routes.

A map of Plumas County in this annex of the Emergency Operations Guide has been divided into operational areas. Volunteers and staff can use this map when selecting alternate shelter or staging sites. The shelter site should be the furthest location from the hazard.

There is no national policy or local or state laws disallowing animals in shelters. The American Red Cross does not allow pets or other animals into shelters they operate. For that reason, this plan was developed to establish animal shelters in advance to expedite animal rescue efforts. Animal Control will make every attempt to assist the shelter manager in caring for any animals at the shelter. Animal Control will also attempt to open animal shelters in close proximity to shelters already opened or that will be opened by the Shelter Branch or the American Red Cross, if possible.

Once the County has established an animal shelter site or multiple animal shelter sites, emergency staff shall contact Animal Control and provide them with the location of the site(s) and description of animals being sheltered. Animal Control will provide staff at each shelter site to assist with medical and feeding needs. Animal Control will also provide emergency sheltering at their facility. Emergency staff can contact Animal Control for types of animals that can be sheltered and capacity.

## **Evacuations**

The goal of an animal evacuation is to safely move the affected animal(s) AWAY from the disaster site to pre-established emergency shelters until the disaster is under control and it is safe to return.

Emergency staff's role in an animal evacuation is to provide qualified volunteers for the handling and transportation of animals during an emergency to a requesting agency, emergency responder or resident and assist locating safe sheltering. The Operations Section Chief shall coordinate the evacuation effort using the following guidelines and procedures:

1. The volunteer team heading the evacuation effort shall have a ham operator ("shadow") assigned to them for communication purposes only. Cell phones are not a reliable means of communications. Depending on the situation, either law enforcement personnel will escort into the closed area or a DSW under the supervision of a County Employee will escort into the area.
2. Operations shall provide up-to-date information to volunteers that will be used to determine a safe route to the evacuation site and avoid conflicts with emergency equipment and first responders.
3. Operations shall ensure the roadway leading from the evacuation site to the animal shelter is clear and move volunteers away from hazards.
4. Operations shall ensure the following parties are aware when an animal shelter has been established to deal with large animals and pets:
  - A.) Plumas County OES
  - B.) Plumas County Sheriff's Office
  - C.) Plumas County Animal Services
  - D.) Media sources.
5. Operations shall ensure that ham operators in the EOC are in constant communications with the shadow assigned to the volunteers.
6. Operations shall prepare a public announcement of the types of animals being sheltered and the shelter location(s). The announcement shall be given to Sheriff's Office dispatch center for broadcasting on local radio stations.

The Operations Section Chief shall work closely with law enforcement and fire and rescue personnel in the field and in the EOC during the evacuation. If law enforcement and fire are not available in the EOC, Operations shall communicate with Fire and Law Enforcement Operations at County EOC.

## **Disaster Preparedness For Animal Evacuations**

During an emergency, the time residents have to evacuate their horses or pets may be limited. With an effective home emergency plan, residents gain additional time to move their horses and pets to safety. Disaster preparedness is important for all animals, but it takes extra consideration for horses and large animals because of their size and requirements for transporting them. It is imperative that Plumas County residents are prepared to move their horses, large animals and pets to a safe shelter in the event of an emergency.

## **Small Pets**

If residents must evacuate, it is advisable that they take their pets with them. If it is not safe for residents to stay in the disaster area, it is not safe for their pets. Animals left behind in a disaster can easily be injured, lost or killed. Animals left inside homes can escape through damaged areas, such as broken windows. Animals turned loose to fend for themselves are likely to become victims of exposure, starvation and predators. Their presence can also hinder or complicate emergency response.

It is imperative that residents determine where they will take their pets ahead of time. Here are some recommendations for pet owners:

- Contact their veterinarian for a list of preferred boarding kennels and facilities for use in the event of an emergency.
- Identify hotels and motels that accept pets.
- Ask friends and relatives if they would accept their pets during an emergency.

Residents should prepare supplies for their pets. They should stock up on nonperishables ahead of time, add perishables at the last minute, and have everything ready to go at a moments' notice. They should keep everything accessible, stored in a sturdy container that can be easily carried. The disaster kit should include:

- Medications and medical records stored in a waterproof container and a first aid kit. A pet first aid book is also good to include.
- Sturdy leashes, harnesses and carriers to transport pets safely and to ensure that they can't escape. Carriers should be large enough for the animal to stand comfortably, turn around and lie down. The pet may have to stay in the carrier for hours at a time.
- Current photos and descriptions for identification purposes in case the owners get separated from their pets.
- Food and water for three days for each pet, including bowls, cat litter and litter box and a can opener.
- Pet beds and toys, if you can easily take them, to reduce stress.
- Other useful items include newspapers, paper towels, plastic trash bags, grooming items, and household bleach.

Residents should make sure their pets are collared with up-to-date identification. The tags should include pet owner's name, telephone number, and any urgent medical needs. Plumas County Animal Control recommends microchipping pets for the most permanent form of identification. A microchip is implanted in the animal's shoulder area, and can be read at most local animal shelters.

## **Horse/Livestock Evacuations**

Owners should make arrangements in advance to have horses/livestock trailered in case of an emergency. If a resident does not own a trailer or does not have enough trailer space for all their horses/livestock, they should make arrangements with other horse/livestock owners or organizations to help evacuate their horses.

Residents should know where they can take their horses/livestock in an emergency evacuation. They should make arrangements with another horse/livestock owner or stables in different locations in Plumas County. The disaster may affect nearby stables or shelters, and will require evacuation to a shelter at an opposite location in Plumas County.

Horse/livestock owners should inform friends and neighbors of their evacuation plans. They should post detailed instructions in several locations-including the horse/livestock trailer and barn entrances-to ensure the plans are available to emergency workers or volunteers in case the owners are not able to evacuate their horses/livestock.

Owners should place horses'/livestock's veterinary papers, identification photographs and vital information-such as medical history, allergies and emergency telephone numbers in a watertight envelope. The envelope should be stored with other important papers in a safe place that can be quickly reached.

Halters should be kept ready for horses/livestock. Each halter should include the following information: the horse's name, the owner's name, telephone number and other emergency numbers where someone can be reached. Horse/livestock owners should keep identification information with them to verify ownership. Permanent identification such as tattoos, brands, etched hooves or microchips are best.

It is important that horses are comfortable being loaded into a trailer. If horses are unaccustomed to being loaded into a trailer, the horse owner should practice the procedure with their horse. The stress of a disaster and the unfamiliarity of a trailer may be dangerous to the handler and delay the evacuation process.

The moment may come when a horse owner or volunteer's life may be put into jeopardy because a horse is too panicked to cooperate with a rescue attempt. Volunteers and owners should be prepared to abandon the horse to its own devices and save themselves. Horses and livestock are strong and often survive using their natural instinct for self-preservation.

Owners should be sure to have on hand a supply of water, hay, feed and medications for several days for each animal being evacuated. A basic first aid kit should be prepared that is portable and easily accessible. A disaster preparedness kit should be assembled and ready to go. The kit should contain:

- Plastic trash barrel with lid
- Water buckets

- Non-nylon leads, halters and shanks
- Leg wraps, horse blanket or sheet
- Tarps
- Flashlight, shovel, sharp knife, wire cutters and hoof pick
- Lime or bleach and fly spray

Residents should listen to the Emergency Broadcast System on their TV or tune to a local radio station. They should evacuate horses, large animals and pets early, if possible, to ensure safety and ease stress to themselves and their animals. Residents should call their destination to make sure the site is available.

If residents must leave their horses and other animals, they should leave them in a pre-selected area appropriate for the disaster type. They should leave as much hay, food and water as possible. Residents may not be allowed back into the area for several days. Each animal should have attached to them a luggage tag with the owner's name and phone number or the information can be spray painted on larger animals. Be sure to remove all nylon halters and collars. The Animal Control will coordinate for the care and feeding of any animals left to shelter in place within the evacuated areas when possible.

All loose animals will be picked up, collected and transported to shelters. These animals will be tracked and cared for until picked up by their owners or until other arrangements have been made. Any unclaimed animals at the close of the emergency shelter will be handled in accordance with Animal Control SOP.

The leading causes of death to large animals during disaster are:

- Collapsed barns
- Kidney failure due to dehydration
- Electrocution from downed power lines
- Fencing failures

In order to reduce the chance of the spread of disease and to protect the public health, it is essential that local jurisdictions be responsible for coordinating the pickup, removal, and disposal of dead animals.