

North Carolina State Animal Response Team (SART)

Setting Up a Temporary Animal Shelter

SART has developed guidelines to assist each County Animal Response Team (CART) with its disaster preparations with information on setting up a temporary animal shelter. Disaster response in North Carolina functions under the Incident Command System (ICS). This insures unity and chain of command, that a common terminology is used, that there are consistent organizational elements and position titles as well as personnel accountability and resource management. These guidelines have been developed with the ICS in mind. CART members are encouraged to participate in basic ICS training, available from their local North Carolina Office of Emergency Management.

Pre-planning – Identify Potential Shelter Facilities Before a Disaster Strikes

When a disaster strikes, all the animals in the community will be affected. As part of its pre-disaster planning, the CART should identify potential “pet friendly” shelters in the community. Plans should include shelter for both owned and stray dogs and cats as well as livestock, horses and exotics. Alternative animals such as birds, reptiles and owned wildlife may also be presented and should be planned for. Frequently, more than one site will be required to meet the needs of the community and the variety of species

The following are the types of temporary animal shelters and their functions that may be needed in a disaster:

1. A pet friendly shelter that houses citizens who have evacuated with their owned animals. Generally, a separate area in the shelter is designated to house animals and is staffed by volunteers.
2. A temporary shelter where owned animals can be relinquished and later reclaimed by their owners.
3. Stray animal shelter animal control, animal rescue teams, or the public can bring stray animals to be treated and housed and where the public can look for lost animals.
4. Large animal or livestock shelter.

Any of the above shelters may be co-located or you may need different facilities in different areas. Temporary shelter locations should be selected and identified in advance by the CART. Selection criteria should include location and proximity to major roadways, availability of large secure areas, running water, adequate number of toilets and showers, impervious flooring, air conditioning, Depending on the resources in a community, the following facilities can lend themselves to use as a temporary animal shelter:

Animal Shelter (animal control or humane society)
Boarding kennels
Fairgrounds
Armory
Empty commercial building (such as a supermarket)
Armory
Schools with 2 or more gymnasiums.

As the CART develops its list of potential temporary animal shelters, it is essential to work closely with the local North Carolina Office of Emergency Management to coordinate animal issues and to insure that the

shelter receives assistance and equipment needed. Contact with the Red Cross and/or other organizations that shelter humans is also critical in pre-planning for a disaster. Each organization may have its own rules or regulations regarding animals that must be taken into consideration. For example, the Red Cross will not operate a shelter that houses animals, however, it has recently enacted a policy that allows animals to be co-located with a human shelter as long as there are separate entrances and animals are housed separate and apart from the human. Many communities have older schools with a second, new gymnasium. The Red Cross may operate a shelter at the school with humans housed in the new gym. A separate temporary animal shelter could be set up in the old gym.

When a disaster strikes, The Animal Control Director or Emergency Management director, in consultation with experienced staff and volunteers, chooses a site for the shelter and chooses locations for each functional area within the site. The shelter site should be clearly marked with signs at the site itself. Place signs with the address and phone number for the temporary shelter at key locations in the area, such as human shelters.

When Disaster Strikes – Setting up a Temporary Shelter

Within the Incident Command System (ICS) the CART falls under the “Operations Section” which is responsible for directing the tactical actions to meet incident objectives. Resources and supplies should be obtained in accordance with ICS procedures. The following are guidelines for setting a temporary animal shelter operation.

Establish a Command Post

The Incident Command Post (ICP) may be within the temporary shelter, or nearby. The ICP is where the shelter director and coordinators, in addition to any assigned volunteers, oversee and direct the daily operations of the temporary shelter. Members of the public and volunteers who are not assigned to work in this area are not allowed access to the Command Center.

Management of the facility and all operations involving animals will come under the ICP and will be operated accordingly.

Location: The ICP should ideally it should be located away from the general noise and confusion, have the ability to provide security and contain the equipment needed for communication and status reporting. A secure area toward the rear of the facility where access can easily be controlled and the public cannot visually observe the activity is preferred. This will prevent the public from gaining access, which could cause interruptions.

The following functions may exist within the temporary animal shelter/command post:

Communication Center

Communication equipment found in the Communication Center should include: phones, fax machines, computers with Internet and E-Mail access, and field radios. HAM radio operators would also set up their operation within or close to the Communication Center, too, if they were available to you.

In some disasters phone service may not be operating. In those cases, cellular phones (or, if available, satellite phones) should be used. Cellular service can quickly be over loaded during a disaster and is not always reliable.

Location: The Communication Center should be in an area away from the noise and the congestion of the facility, especially barking dogs. Electricity will be needed in this area.

Generator

A generator may be needed if the facility has no electricity. As part of its planning process, the CART should get on a priority list with emergency management to receive a generator. Preplan for adequate numbers of heavy duty, commercial extension cords.

Please note that generators are very dangerous. The CART should designate several key personnel who understand proper use and hookup to enable safe use of a generator.

Location: Generators can be very noisy. Place the generator as far away from the center of activity as possible. Outdoor-approved power cords may be used to run electricity to those areas of the facility that need it. Gasoline for the generator must be stored in a locked, secured structure far away from the shelter. No smoking signs must be put up within, and near, this area.

Public Information

Designate an Information Officer and a Staging Area for the media. It should be the first stopping point for everyone entering the facility. Direct disaster victims looking for owned animals and people who want to donate supplies or their time should all be directed to the PI area.

The Information Officer should have clear instructions about how to deal with the media. In all likelihood, you *need* the media to get word out about where you are located, what needs you have for supplies and volunteers, and what services you are offering. Ideally, have information sheets ready to hand out to both the public and the media. Both the public and the media appreciate having things in written form—esp. information about your facility, tips for pet owners in a disaster, and lists of other shelters, veterinary clinics, and hotels that accept pets.

Location: The Public Information area should be located at the entrance to the facility so that the public can easily access it. This area should function as a barrier keeping the public out of restricted areas of the facility (especially the Command Center and the areas where animals are being sheltered).

Volunteer Staging Area:

CART should establish volunteer job descriptions and develop training programs prior to a disaster. Any volunteer who will handle animals must be pre-vaccinated against rabies.

Designating a staging area for resources (volunteers and equipment) provides for greater accountability of available staff, a safe location for personnel and equipment, prevents “freelancing”, controls and assists with personnel check-in and allows for proper planning of resource use.

Volunteer personnel should begin by signing in, putting on a nametag, and reading the daily information board. The board will provide them with updated information, any procedural changes, and other announcements.

Volunteers sign out in this same area as they complete their shift. (Use ICS Check-In Form 211 for personnel tracking)

People with no animal handling or disaster experience will volunteer to help. The CART must determine if and when to use walk-in volunteers. If you do, have a system for overseeing their work and a specific set of tasks that they can be assigned to (such as answering the phone or washing dishes). However, even for simple tasks, it is necessary that they be given enough instruction so that they can do their tasks well.

Establish specific volunteer work schedules that will work even if the phone system goes down. Each shift should be briefed and given their work assignment. Have assigned teams with assigned shifts so calls don't have to be made each time you need volunteers.

Location: The Volunteer Staging area should be near the entrance to the facility. The public should not have access to this area.

Human First Aid

A basic First Aid area should be set up within the facility. This area should be easily identified so that there is no confusion when someone needs basic medical care. Prior to opening the shelter, identify the closest emergency medical facility so those individuals with more serious injuries can get the professional help that they need.

Location: The Human First Aid area should be set up in the Volunteer Break area. Smaller first aid kits should be located in the Triage, Main Kennels, Public Information, and the Animal Intake and Reclaim areas. First aid kits always go into the field with rescue teams, too.

Personnel Break Area

This is where volunteers can eat and rest while they are at the facility,

Location: The Volunteer Break area should be in a quiet, clean part of the facility, where the public does not have access. A water source and electricity in this area are preferable. Access to refrigeration and running water is also preferred.

Volunteer Camps (Housing)

Temporary locations equipped and staffed to provide sleeping, food, water and sanitary services to volunteer personnel may be needed.

Location: The camp area should be set up away from the high activity areas of the facility. Tents may need to be put up, so designate an area where stakes can easily be secured in the ground. When the facility is within a building, designate a secure room or corner for volunteers to set up cots. The public should not have access to the Volunteer Housing area.

Rest Room Facilities

If rest room facilities are not available, or if existing facilities are not functional because the water is off, then portable bathrooms need to be brought in. It is also important, when using portable bathrooms that a schedule is set up for regular servicing of the bathrooms. Sanitary facilities should be coordinated through

Location: The rest rooms, if you are using portable ones, should be set up in an area of your facility where the public will not be able to use them and far enough away that they do not become an odor problem.

Resources

In all ICS applications, resources are described both by kind and type (what kind of resource and what is it capable of doing). Resources include personnel as well as equipment and should be requested based on need.

Animal Areas within a temporary shelter

Triage

Rescued animals must be assessed prior to being housed at a temporary shelter. Seriously injured animals may be treated in triage or referred for to another location. Vaccinations may be given. The quarantine area for sick and injured animals may be here, or combined with the holding area for bite cases (see “Quarantine” area notes). Any animals suspected of being sick must be kept separate from healthy animals. It is especially important to keep animals with contagious diseases separate from the rest of the population.

Initial records and a description of the animal should begin in triage area.

Location: It is also important to set up the Triage area in a part of the facility away from public view and to keep it as far away as possible from the highest areas of activity. This area should also have access to electricity and a water supply. It will need to be equipped with examination tables, cages and kennels, water access, and electricity.

Animal Intake and Reclaim

The identification process and related paperwork are completed on all animals coming into and leaving the facility. It is at this location that a master list of all animals in the shelter should be kept and maintained. A clean printout of the master list should be produced, if possible, at the end of each shift for the next shift’s use. Ideally, the records are computerized.

Personnel must be clear about where animals of each species and health status (inoculation status known versus not known, for example) should be taken and are being housed. However, as important as the paperwork is, volunteers in this area must never forget that paying close attention to each individual animal is imperative and that they must carefully look at each animal coming in and send animals needing immediate intervention to the Triage area. Personnel should use common sense as well as be trained to recognize signs of dehydration, effects of heat or cold, disease. (*note: develop written shelter operation procedures*)

Location: Animal Intake and Reclaim should be as close as possible to the Public Information area, as the majority of the people entering the facility will be directed to this area.

Foster Care

In most disasters it will be necessary to implement a foster care program. Foster care records and information should be maintained from the shelter facility and the records must always be available. Foster care can help when (a) there is not enough shelter space for the animals that are being brought to the temporary shelter and (b) if the displaced animals will need a place to stay beyond the time the temporary shelter is going to be open. All the coordination of foster care applications and placement are taken care of in the Foster Care area.

Location: Foster Care should be located adjacent to the Animal Intake area because they share a lot of the same paperwork.

Lost Animal Registration

Anyone searching for a lost animal should be directed to the lost animal registration area first where a lost report and description should be taken. If the animal is not at the shelter, these pet owners should be given a list of other shelters and veterinary clinics in the area to visit or call.

Location: The Lost Animal Registration area should be set up next to the Animal Intake and Reclaim area.

Kennels/Animal Housing

Animals cannot be loose within a temporary animal shelter. The facility must utilize portable kennels, cages, crates or other available methods of restraint until they are reclaimed, placed in foster homes, or adopted. Separate areas must be designated for dogs, cats, and other animals.

If operating only one temporary animal shelter, owner surrendered animals should be housed apart from stray/injured animals. Depending on the size of the incident and the number of shelters in operation, owned animals may be housed at another temporary shelter.

Location: The animal housing area should be close to the Dog Walk areas and as far away as possible from where the public will be. This is to prevent them from viewing the animals and maybe attempting to claim an animal that is not theirs. Also, keeping the animals removed from the public will help reduce the amount of stress that the animals are subjected to.

Dog Walk Area

Dogs that are crated or kenneled must be walked regularly. A designated area for dog walking should be established in a secure area, out of the public view. Try to position this area so that the dogs are not walked in the same vicinity, or walked through the same doorway, as the public uses. Sanitation and clean up are essential in all dog walk areas so garbage cans and scoopers should be kept in this area.

Location: The dog walk area should be located near the kennels to enable the dogs to be quickly taken to the area to relieve themselves. It should be designated as a separate area by roping it off or making the area with tape. If the temporary shelter is located at a school, an athletic field is ideal for dog walking.

Quarantine

At least two separate quarantine areas will be needed for the following purposes. (1) Housing aggressive or potentially dangerous animals and (2) housing and observation of sick and injured animals (including pregnant females).

Only experienced dog handlers should ever walk or handle a dog that is aggressive. Aggressive dogs should be walked only at times when few or no other dogs are being walked. Note that during a disaster animals may be more likely to bite because they are afraid, hungry or confused. It is essential to handle all animals carefully and take steps to prevent a bite from occurring.

Location: The Quarantine area has to be set up in a secure part of the facility, where the public and volunteers, without appropriate training, do not have access. In some disasters it may be necessary to house these animals away from the facility, e.g., a boarding kennel, a veterinary office, or a neighboring animal shelter.

Animal Food Staging and Distribution Areas

Two staging areas for animal food may be needed. One area for food used in the temporary shelter and other area for donated food to be distributed in the community.

Location: The Animal Food Staging and Distribution areas must be in locations where the food will not get wet. If possible, set up the food areas in locations where trucks have easy access.

Animal Food Preparation

A designated area for food preparation and cleaning food utensils will be needed.

Location: The Animal Food Preparation area should be set up close to both the kennels and the Food Storage area and also be close to a water supply.

Animal Supply Staging Area and Distribution

Animal supplies and other resources including food dishes, litter boxes, cat litter, scoops, cages, toys, leashes, collars, muzzles, flea spray, shampoo, nail clippers, brushes, combs, newspaper, towels, and blankets must be stored so available as needed. These items will be used within the facility, but also may be given out to human disaster victims for their pets as needed. Storage and distribution areas may be located outside the temporary animal shelter.

Location: The Animal Supply Staging and Distribution area should be set up in two areas. One area will be for supplies needed to take care of the animals being housed at the facility. The other area should be set up close to the facility entrance, as these items will be given out to the public to replace what they have lost in the disaster and if heavy bags of food have to be carried just a short distance, it makes the job a lot easier.

Water Storage

A Water Storage area will be needed when normal water resources are not operating or the tap water is not suitable for drinking. The preferred way to store water is in 50 gallon barrels so that water can be pumped out of them into buckets and distributed as is needed.

Location: The Water Storage area should be in a central location within the facility and so that delivery trucks can easily access it. If the weather is hot and humid bacteria will grow in water that is stored in direct sunlight, making the water unsuitable for drinking. Store water in a cool, shaded area.

Animal Cage Cleaning – (develop written cleaning procedures)

A designated area, with running water, is needed to clean kennels, crates and cages each day as well as litter boxes. Litter boxes should not be washed in the food preparation area.

Location: The Animal Cage Cleaning area needs to be set up near a water source and not somewhere that the run off will cause other parts of the facility to flood.

Grooming

When possible, a bathing/grooming area may be needed. This area can be co-located with the triage area as animals may need to go from triage to an area for clean up.

Location: The Dog Bath area needs to be near a water source and electricity. If the weather is cold, this area should be enclosed to protect the animals being bathed from the cold. It is also important to set this area up in a location so that run off will not cause other parts of the facility to flood.

Dead Animal Storage

Dead animals must be properly stored until picked up. If a freezer is not available, animal carcasses must be tied securely in several thicknesses of plastic bags and kept at a distance so as to not pose a health risk or odor problem. Fly spray should be sprayed often.

Location: The Dead Animal Storage area should be in an area of your facility away from people and healthy animals.

Garbage

Have a dumpster brought to the site if possible. Garbage should be bagged and stored in a designated area that is a distance from the kennel/housing areas.

Location: The Garbage area should be in a remote corner of the facility where the smell does not become a problem.

Rescue Equipment Staging Area

Location: The Rescue Equipment Storage area should be in a secure section of the facility where the public does not have access.

Rescue Staging Areas

Animal Rescue Task Forces and Strike Teams should report to and assemble at a designated staging area. Additional staging areas for special vehicles and/or equipment may be needed. Human first aid equipment should be available in this area.

Location: The Rescue Staging area should be near the area where the rescue equipment is stored. It should be an area with access to a telephone. If possible, set it up out of view of the public and where there is less activity.

Parking

Designate an area where volunteers and visitors to the facility can park. Spaces closest to the facility should be saved for the public. Be careful not to inconvenience residents and/or adjacent businesses.

LOCATION: The Parking area should be as close as possible to where the public will be entering the facility. It may be necessary, if parking is limited, to locate an off-site parking area, and provide shuttle service back and forth between it and the facility.

Processing Incoming Animals During a Disaster

Keeping a record of each animal that comes in is one of the most important things that you will do during a disaster. The person in charge of Animal Intake is the Animal Intake Coordinator. The coordinator and volunteers assigned to this area complete paperwork, photograph the animals, and put identification on each animal when it comes in.

There are three classifications of animals that arrive during a disaster; stray animals, owned animals and dead animals. Specific procedures should be followed to document intake of each. Intake guidelines include the following:

Stray Animal Intake

1. Take the animal to the Animal Intake area.
2. Secure the animal in a cage or on a leash.
3. Scan the animal for a microchip and look for any tattoos.
4. Complete the *Animal Intake* form and the *Horse Identification* form if you are taking in a horse.
5. Complete identification process:
 - Take (2) Polaroid pictures of the animal
 - Put identifying sticker on Polaroid pictures - attach (1) picture to the lower right corner of the Animal Intake form and place photo number (2) in the Stray Animal binder under the category animal it is and the sex - and file the Animal Intake form in the Stray Animal binder
 - Fill out the Jiffy Tag.
 - Fill out the insert for the neckband.
 - Put the Jiffy Tag on the neckband and secure it around the animal's neck.
6. If there is a chance the animal might bite, put a *Caution - Could Bite* sign on the cage. Or, if it is an animal being held for observation following a bite, put a *Caution - Quarantined Animal* sign on the cage.
7. Fill out a cage tag and have a shelter volunteer take the animal to the assigned cage or area where it will be housed, unless the animal needs to be seen by a veterinarian, then it would go to the triage area

Owned Animal Intake:

1. Take animal to Animal Intake area.
2. Secure the animal in a cage or on a leash.
3. Scan the animal for a microchip and look for any tattoos - even though the owner is known, this is done so that the microchip or the tattoo number can be noted on the Animal Intake form.

4. Complete the *Animal Intake* form and the *Horse Identification* form if you are taking in a horse.
5. Complete identification process:
 - Take one Polaroid picture of the animal - include the owners in the picture if they are available.
 - Put identifying sticker on Polaroid picture and attach picture to lower right corner of Animal Intake form and file the Animal Intake form in the Owned Animal binder in alphabetical order by owner's last name.
 - Fill out the Jiffy Tag.
 - Fill out the insert for the neckband.
 - Put the Jiffy Tag on the neckband and secure it around the animal's neck.
6. If there is a chance the animal might bite, put a *Caution - Biter* sign on the cage or if it is an animal being held for observation following a bite, put a *Caution - Quarantined Animal* sign on the cage.
7. Fill out a cage tag and have a shelter volunteer take the animal to the assigned cage or area where it will be housed, unless the animal needs to be seen by a veterinarian, then it would go to the triage area.

Dead Animal Intake

1. Take animal to the area designated for disposal of dead animals.
2. Take a picture or pictures of the animal. Take as many pictures as needed so the animal may be positively identified (include distinguishing marks in the pictures). Attach the pictures to the lower right-hand corner of the Animal Intake form.
3. Scan the animal for a microchip and look for any tattoos.
4. Complete the *Animal Intake* form and the *Horse Identification* form if you are taking in a horse.
5. Place the animal in a bag designated for dead animals.
6. File the Animal Intake form with the pictures attached; mark the Animal's Intake number, which is on the Animal Intake form in the upper right corner, on the dead animal bag; and file the Animal Intake form in the *Dead Animal* binder.

How to Put Identification on Shelter Animals

Every dog and cat that arrives at a temporary animal shelter in a disaster must have identification put on it. One option for identification is the use of "Ident-A-Band" bracelets.

The identification collars called Ident-A-Band bracelets, similar to the plastic bands used on patients in a hospital, are effective. They come on a spool with 400 feet of plastic banding material. Once on the animals, they do not come off, unless cut with scissors.

Another product on the market for temporary identification of animals are the strips of plastic coated paper, with sticky ends that are pressed together. Note, however, they do not remain on the animal for very long, especially if you are working in humid weather.

Animal ID

1. Cut a length of the Ident-A-Band collar that will fit around the animal's neck. Insert inside the band the strip of paper pre-cut to work with the Ident-A-Band collar, with the following information printed on it:

- Name of agency responsible for the animal
- Phone number of the agency responsible for the animal
- Animal intake number taken from the Animal Intake form

2. Complete a heart shaped Jiffy Tag, printing the following information on the tag:

- Name of agency responsible for the animal
- Phone number of agency responsible for the animal
- Animal intake number taken from the Animal Intake form

Then place the pre-cut plastic laminating sheet on either side of the heart shaped tag. (No laminating machine is required.) Attach the "O" ring that is provided.

3. Slide the Jiffy Tag onto the Ident-A-Band collar. Place the band around the neck of the animal and use a metal clasp that comes with the Ident-A-Band bracelet to secure the band in place.

Additional Information

Ident-A-Bands remain on the animals until they are either reclaimed by their owners or adopted. If an animal is placed in a foster home, the Ident-A-Band remains on them.

If a dog or cat comes in with an existing collar, leave that collar on the animal, and make an identification band just large enough to be fastened onto that existing collar. You *do not* have to make a band large enough to fit around the animal's neck.

Since the Ident-A-Bands are not inexpensive, try and recycle them as many times as you can. If you remove an identification band from a large dog, that band can be used again on two cats or two small dogs.

Ordering Information

Ident-A-Bands

The Ident-A-Bands are ordered from Hollister Inc. and the item number is 6735. If you are interested in ordering the bands, you may contact the company at 800-323-4060. The inserts are also ordered from Hollister. The item number is 6653.

Jiffy Tags

The Jiffy Tags are ordered from Animal Care Equipment and Services. The Tag is item # JT-1. ACES phone number is 800-338-2237.