



California Animal Response Emergency System (CARES) Fact Sheet

California Department of Food and Agriculture

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It's been raining for days. Heavy rain is forecasted for the next several days. The water systems are near flooding stage. Having experienced flooding in the past, you ask yourself: "What should I be doing to prepare for a possible evacuation?" Besides your family's safety, do you have an evacuation plan for your companion animal(s) or livestock? Where will you take them? Do you have supplies to take care of them? What are the evacuation routes? These are some of the questions you may need to answer on very short notice. The responsibility of evacuating and providing care for animals during an emergency, whether it is a flood, earthquake, wild fire, or storm, rests with the animals' owner.

Do you remember Rodeo, the dog, waiting on the rooftop to be rescued, the dairy farmer in Yuba City who lost his cattle to the floods, the Placer County Fairgrounds packed with evacuated animals? These are all events that occurred in California during the 1997 El Nino floods. After those floods, it became apparent that pet and livestock evacuation in the State required improved organization and coordination among responding agencies.

The Governor's Flood Emergency Action Team's After Action Report recommended that the Office of Emergency Services (OES), in cooperation with the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), review procedures for livestock and pet evacuation and develop animal safety and relocation procedures to be used in future disasters. California Animal Response in Emergency System (CARES) is the result of that recommendation. CDFA is the lead agency to assist OES in addressing animal issues during disasters.

How will CARES assist during disasters?

CARES will coordinate resources and decisions once an incident escalates to a state-level emergency. As a county or local area exhausts its resources, it will contact OES through the Regional Emergency

Operations Center (REOC) to request assistance for additional resources and to make decisions on how best to respond. The REOC will 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 the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS). SEMS is used during all disaster and emergency responses in California that require multi-jurisdictional coordination. SEMS ensures that resources are used effectively and efficiently to protect life, the environment, and property. This includes the protection and safety of animals.

The CARES Plan is not intended to supercede local government plans but to assist them as they exhaust their resources. It is designed to enhance the coordination efforts already present in county and city plans. 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 Plan identifies the participants who were recognized by OES and CDFA as having roles and responsibilities in emergency response. It also defines the roles and responsibilities of those participants. The CARES participants will activate and respond to animal rescue, emergency care and shelter, veterinary care, and general assistance for animals, at or near the facilities sheltering and caring for people. The CARES Plan also outlines disaster preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation activities.

Disasters are always managed locally by the county OES. Three key individuals work together at the county level to address animal issues during disasters:

1. County Animal Coordinator
2. OES Coordinator
3. Volunteer California Veterinary Medical Disaster Coordinator

Who is involved in developing CARES?

The CARES plan was developed and fostered by a committee comprised of government agencies, non-profit organizations, and private companies whom CDFA and OES recognized as having a critical role as emergency responders. The participants are developing strategies to organize resources in support of local government when responding to animal issues during a disaster. The committee's purpose and goals are to create a framework of information and procedures to strengthen the communication between responding agencies and operational areas within counties and to lessen the effects that disasters have on animals and their owners. In addition to CDFA and OES, representatives from the following organizations are involved in this on-going planning:

- California Department of Fish and Game
- California Department of Health Services
- California Department of Social Services
- California Agricultural Commissioners Sealers Association
- University of California/Davis
- California State Horse Racing Board
- California Animal Control Director's Association
- California Veterinary Medical Association
- American Red Cross
- The Humane Society of the United States
- County of Sacramento Animal Care and Regulation
- Emergency Animal Rescue Service

What is the status of the CARES Plan?

The Plan was finalized by the CARES committee and must now go through the approval process at OES. The **CARES Plan** will be posted on CDFA's website, once OES approves it. It will be referenced in the California State Emergency Plan.

CARES related activities:

CDFA is engaged in several activities to prepare for the implementation of CARES. They are:

- Outreach to the public through informational materials (visit the CDFA website) and participation in disaster preparedness activities to improve the level of disaster preparedness of livestock and pet owners;
- Support of counties in developing a county Animal Disaster Preparedness/Response Plan;
- Development of Standard Operating Procedures for use in the implementation of CARES;

- Training responders in SEMS, disaster planning, and response to animal issues in order to enhance the CARES Plan.

What can you do to prepare for the next disaster?

All Californians should be prepared for large-scale disasters. If you have lived in California for any length of time, you know that it is a disaster-prone state. You can be prepared for the next disaster by heightening your awareness, working with your local government to find out what they are doing, and offering to assist them in preparing a disaster plan. Local veterinarians and livestock producers play especially important roles in local plans. Here are some ideas for preparing to protect your animals during a disaster:

- ✓ Plan ahead. Know how to get early warnings about threats like flood, fire, and disease outbreaks by tuning into the Emergency Alert System in your area.
- ✓ Talk to your veterinarian, University Extension, or CDFA district representative about evacuation and emergency care for your animals.
- ✓ Identify an emergency animal shelter location nearby: kennels, adjoining farms, state and local fairgrounds, etc.
- ✓ Get to know the policies and staff of your local animal control authority, as well as the local animal non-profit rescue and care groups.
- ✓ Ask neighbors and friends to evacuate your animals if a disaster strikes when you are away.
- ✓ License your companion animals; make sure your animals can be easily identified (microchip, identification tags, tattoos, ear tags, etc.) so they can be reunited with you after the disaster.
- ✓ Take pictures of you with your animal(s) so you can show proof of ownership if you are separated during a disaster.
- ✓ Assemble an animal disaster kit (see our website for details).

For more information, please call CDFA's Animal Health Branch at (916) 654-1447 or visit our website at:

www.cdfa.ca.gov/programs/disasterprep.htm

The site has information regarding the County Animal Disaster Preparedness and Response Planning Guide, Disaster Preparedness Brochures, Disaster Preparedness Kits, and other disaster preparedness websites, as well as other resource information.