

PROJECTS IN VETERINARY DISASTER MEDICINE

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BACKGROUND

Disaster medicine for animals has recently been recognized as an important aspect of the veterinary profession. An organized program in this area offers the profession an opportunity to demonstrate its intention and competency as stewards of animal care. In Indiana examples of committed and collaborative efforts to show leadership toward this aspect of the Human-Animal Bond have been many. These include the consultation on the sea otter rescue operations after the Exxon Valdez oil spill, care of horses after Hurricane Andrew, feed supplies to drought, flood and fire affected areas of the nation, and the development of a state emergency preparedness plan for animals. Much of this has been possible because of common interests and sharing of ideas on veterinary disaster medicine through groups such as Purdue's Center for Human Animal Interaction, a "get the job done" approach of Hoosiers when it comes to providing help during and after disasters, the proactive attitudes of the state Emergency Management Agency, Indiana Veterinary Medical Association and American Veterinary Academy on Disaster Medicine and extensive support by the citizens of Indiana.

The potential benefits from taking a leading role in veterinary disaster medicine are tremendous. They include national and international recognition, and most of all advancements in veterinary disaster medicine will provide a basis for improved care and well being of animals in our state and nation.

PROPOSAL

There have been a considerable number of delays in getting a program in veterinary disaster medicine off the ground. Slowing progress has been the lack of time that interested people have been able to allocate to this very important mission. At universities funding of coordinated and focused programs would make a substantial contribution to overcome this concern. This could be achieved by sponsoring faculty time.

There is also uncertainty over the length of time for which a commitment will be available to build programs in veterinary disaster medicine. Without at least a three year commitment, any effort runs the risk of remaining no more than a temporary interest in a topical area. To develop a program to a state of self perpetuation takes about a 3 year commitment.

Purdue University School of Veterinary Medicine has the expertise and physical resources to take a leadership role in the area of veterinary disaster medicine through spear heading programs, and by consulting and coordinating related efforts. With the appropriate financial support the school is also prepared to make a substantial commitment to this field.