Title: Emergency Sheltering Following a Tornado

Case description: Humane Society X contracts with the local county to provide sheltering services and admits 3,500 animals annually. The organization participated in county-wide disaster planning. Written memoranda of understanding (MOUs) regarding disaster response activities were created between county government, animal welfare organizations and veterinarians. Humane Society X developed its own disaster plan to complement county planning. Management staff and the veterinarian attended Incident Command System training.

In May 2011, an F3 (Fujita damage scale) tornado struck the community within a mile of the shelter. Several hundred homes and businesses were destroyed, but the shelter suffered only minor damage. Key staff and volunteers reported to the shelter as directed by the disaster plan. Although the shelter was without electrical power, cell phone service remained available and was relied upon for communication. In accordance with the disaster plan, the shelter manager informed the county Emergency Operation Center that the shelter was operational. The shelter was then requested to provide emergency triage and sheltering for animals affected by the tornado. County animal control officers were responsible for rescue and transport of animals.

The shelter disaster plan delineated multiple lead roles for response. The shelter manager served as team leader and was responsible for media communications. The volunteer coordinator managed resources and addressed supply and personnel needs. The veterinarian
supervised shelter operations and provided direct patient care. To expand the available capacity of the humane society’s facility, a temporary emergency shelter was created in an adjacent storage building as outlined in the disaster plan and previously practiced in training exercises. A manual record keeping system was used.

Upon admission, animals were checked for identification, assigned a unique identification number, and were collared with a neckband indicating such number. Staff examined each animal and completed individual medical records using standardized forms according to disaster plan operating procedures. Staff triaged animals to the veterinarian for further evaluation as needed. Critically ill or injured animals were transferred to private veterinary clinics for treatment. Dogs and cats were vaccinated against rabies and received either a Distemper-Adenovirus-Parainfluenza-Parovirus and intranasal *Bordetella*/Parainfluneza or feline viral rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, panleulopenia vaccine, respectively. All animals received an oral anthelmintic effective against hookworms and roundworms and were treated topically for external parasites. Animal housing was segregated by species, age, health status, and behavior. Protocols for daily care established in the disaster response plan were implemented with modifications for individual animal needs specified by the veterinarian.

**Outcome:** A total of 87 pets were received within the first 24 hours of operation. Partner shelters were contacted as per MOUs to transfer animals already in the shelter’s care prior to the disaster. The shelter closed all regular services for one month. Emergency sheltering was provided for 234 animals with 72% reunited with their families.

**Implications/Applications:** A shelter veterinarian’s involvement with both organizational and community planning is critical for development and implementation of an effective disaster
response plan. Engagement of community partners and collaboration with government agencies with previously agreed upon MOUs is critical to a successful response.