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Considerations When Making a Contingency Plan

Dealers, exhibitors, research facilities, intermediate handlers, carriers and other entities regulated under the Animal Welfare Act are now required to take steps to be prepared for emergencies and disasters. An emergency plan, also referred to as a “contingency plan,” safeguards the animals should an emergency or disaster occur and supports the facility’s response to emergencies and recovery from emergencies most likely to happen to their facility. Employees and other personnel involved in animal care or business processes should be aware of the facility’s contingency plan and sufficiently trained on it.

This tech note provides general considerations a facility can take into account when designing its own contingency plan. There is *no* required format or length for a facility’s contingency plan. APHIS wants these plans to be useful for the facility and beneficial for the animals during potential disaster situations. Individual facilities have the freedom to design their plans to best suit their facility, location and needs. Dealers, exhibitors and research facilities housing animals at holding facilities need to include these holding facilities in their contingency plan if the holding facility does not have its own contingency plan. APHIS inspectors are available for assistance in reviewing and developing plans, as needed.

Specific details of the Animal Welfare Act regulations regarding contingency plans can be found here: *9 CFR, Part 2, Subpart C, § 2.38(l)(1)(i-iv) and Subpart I, § 2.134(a)(1-4); Subpart H, § 2.102(a)(4) and (b)(3) 9 CFR, Part 2, Subpart C, § 2.38(i)(4).*

Based on the regulations, the following five basic elements should be addressed in the plan.

1. Common emergencies likely to happen to your facility

The terms “emergency” and “disaster” are not limited to major natural disasters, such as hurricanes, and should include consideration of localized events such as a fire, severe weather or any other unexpected situation that interrupts normal animal care activities. Some possible emergencies to consider include, but are not limited to:

- structural fire
- electrical outage
- disruption in clean water or feed supply
- disruption in access to facility (e.g. road closures)
- intentional attack on the facilities/animals/personnel
- hazardous materials situation
- employee absence
- unexpected change in ownership
- faulty heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system
- animal escape
- animal disease outbreak
- flooding
- earthquake
- landslide/mudslide/avalanche
- hurricane
- tornado
- blizzard/ice storm
- extreme heat/humidity
- wildfire

2. Specific tasks to be taken during emergencies

Depending on the circumstances and type of emergency, a facility should decide for itself whether its animals and employees should be relocated. Facilities housing animals should also have a plan for animal escapes.

Sheltering-in-place. Animals remain in primary enclosures during an emergency and employees stay on premises to provide animal care.

- husbandry and care needs for the animals (e.g. food and water)
- access to a veterinarian

Sheltering-in-place (continued):

- staffing and housing options (including food and water) for the staff
- environmental conditions (e.g. temperature, ventilation, lighting)
- animal identification
- records maintenance

Evacuation. Animals are moved out of their primary enclosure to another location, either on the grounds of the facility or to a remote location.

- transportation vehicle(s) and equipment/caging
- alternate location(s) for housing animals: These locations should be included on the facility's contingency plan.
- husbandry and care needs for the animals during transport and once animals are relocated
- environmental conditions on transportation vehicle and at alternate location(s)
- staffing during transport and at the alternative location
- animal identification
- records transfer

Escaped animal(s)

- supplies needed (e.g. communication equipment, gloves, nets, drugs, darting equipment)
- secondary barriers secured
- employee/public safety procedures
- notification of emergency response/security/law enforcement personnel
- recovery/transport of animal(s) back to original enclosure

3. Chain-of-command for implementing the plan

Pre-assigning responsibility to personnel for the tasks identified above as part of the planning process can streamline your response during an emergency by establishing clear authority structures and lines of communication.

- Identify the person who has the authority to initiate the contingency plan.
- Identify the people (or positions) in charge of the tasks listed in the plan.
- Have an updated contact list distributed to all of the people involved in the plan.
- Identify the methods to be used to maintain communication.

4. Materials and resources required for response and recovery

Facilities have the freedom to decide which equipment and materials they will need to make possible the tasks identified in their contingency plans. Arrangements should be made for how the facility is going to obtain the equipment during an emergency if it is not on-hand, as well as determining if certification or other specialized training is required for the use of any equipment.

- Identify and list materials and resources necessary to implement the plan.
- Obtain the necessary materials or have a plan for obtaining the materials during an emergency

5. Employee training on the plan

Ensuring that employees are aware of the plan and understand their roles will result in more expedient and organized responses during an emergency. "Employees," in this sense, refers not only to paid staff but also to volunteers and others involved in animal care and/or integral to the business operation.

- On your contingency plan, document any and all training provided to your employees.
- Ensure that employees are aware of any changes to the plan or their assigned roles.