



Animal & Ag Tabletop Exercise
April 9, 2015
Oklahoma City, OK
After Action Report (AAR)



EXERCISE SUMMARY

On April 9, 2015 the USDA FEMA Region VI USDA ESF11 Coordinator facilitated a Tabletop Exercise (TTX) in Oklahoma City, OK. The Oklahoma Department of Food, Agriculture and Forestry (ODAFF), Office of State Veterinarian requested assistance with development and facilitation of this event in late 2014. The exercise drafted and developed by the ESF11 Coordinator in consultation with ODAFF officials, the Oklahoma Division of Emergency Management and USDA Veterinary Services personnel. This TTX focused on Animal and Agricultural response issues following a devastating F4 tornado scenario that impacted rural and urban areas near Oklahoma City, OK.

This exercise was designed to utilize and implement current response/recovery plans, protocols and procedures, including the *Oklahoma Emergency Operations Plan, ESF11 Agriculture and Natural Resources Annex, Appendix D – Protection of Companion Animals and Non-Commercial Livestock*. Numerous other agencies also tested implementation of their procedures and plans during the exercise play.

Interest and participation in this exercise was overwhelming. There were 51 participants in the exercise representing 28 different agencies or groups, from local jurisdictions, State agencies, federal agencies, non-governmental, academia and private sector. The lead evaluator for the exercise was the FEMA Region I USDA ESF11 Coordinator. The final participant contact list was shared with those in attendance.

Core Capabilities

The National Planning Scenarios and establishment of the National Preparedness Priorities have steered the focus of homeland security toward a capabilities-based planning approach. Capabilities-based planning focuses on planning under uncertainty because the next danger or disaster can never be forecast with complete accuracy. The selected Core Capabilities for this exercise were:

- 1. Operational Coordination** - Establish and maintain a unified and coordinated operational structure and process that appropriately integrates all critical stakeholders and supports the execution of core capabilities
- 2. Environmental Response/Health and Safety** - Ensure the availability of guidance and resources to address all hazards including hazardous materials, acts of terrorism, and natural disasters in support of the responder operations and the affected communities.
- 3. Mass Care (Animal component)** - Provide life-sustaining services to the affected population with a focus on hydration, feeding, and sheltering to those who have the most need, as well as support for reunifying families [with pets].

Exercise Objectives

Exercise design objectives focus on improving understanding of a response concept, identifying opportunities or problems, and capturing regulatory capabilities that can support disaster operations. This exercise will focus on the Oklahoma Emergency Operations Plan, ESF11 Agriculture and Natural Resources Annex, Appendix D – Protection of Companion Animals and Non-Commercial Livestock.

- 1) Review/discuss processes for a Local Jurisdiction to request State assistance with numerous animal issues following a devastating natural disaster scenario.
- 2) Review/discuss processes involving animal response activities that may have environmental impacts.

3) Review/discuss support for Mass Care activities involving animal rescue, sheltering and medical care.

Exercise Results

The local jurisdictions exhibited excellent operational coordination through local mutual aid and communication before, during and following disasters. Most capabilities concerning the exercise objectives reside at the local level (e.g. Cities). Majority of local jurisdictions have Plans to address animal response issues, with exception of Plans or addendums to address animal carcass removal/disposal. Some groups (e.g. CARTS) were unclear on the reimbursement processes thru the State Emergency Management Agency. Local jurisdictions present were clear on processes to request assistance thru the State Emergency Management Agency, including potential support for animal issues.

Participating agencies were aware of environmental issues following a major disaster. State and/or federal agencies are available to provide technical assistance to local jurisdictions concerning environmental issues. Abundant technical information is also available via the Internet sites for State and/or federal agencies which was shared with the exercise participants.

Local jurisdictions have capabilities concerning animal related mass care activities following a natural disasters thru internal resources or via mutual aid with neighboring jurisdictions. Some participating agencies are encouraged to locate potential animal shelter sites prior to disasters and develop protocols for sharing daily animal shelter numbers with State Emergency Management for situational awareness. Veterinary medical care capabilities are abundant and available thru volunteer and other sources.

ICS Just-In-Time training was provided to the exercise participants during a “working lunch”, and the information was provided to the exercise participants electronically.

The major benefits from the exercise, based on exercise surveys, was the networking between the numerous agencies represented and discussion of potential animal/agriculture related challenges from recent real-world experiences.

