

Animal Services and Protection Functional Annex

Updated: September 27, 2024

I. PURPOSE

To protect wild and domesticated animal resources, the public health, the public food supply, and the environment, and to ensure the humane care and treatment of animals in case of a large-scale emergency, including hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, wind-driven, water, drought, fire, explosion, building collapse, commercial transportation accidents, chemical spills, nuclear power plant accidents, or other situations that cause animal suffering.

II. SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS

A. Situation

1. This plan is intended for use by Alexander County to take immediate action in providing care and control to minimize animal suffering in a large-scale emergency. This action will be aimed at all animals that may need help, whether owned, stray, domestic, or wild.
2. Within Alexander County, the Emergency Management Coordinator or his authorized representative(s) may place into effect established plans and procedures and direct both the emergency and recovery aspects of the incident. He may deviate from these procedures when, in his judgment, immediate and direct action is necessary to protect the safety of the citizens of Alexander County.
3. Primary Agencies:
 - a. Alexander County Animal Services
 - i. Coordinate support agencies to manage animal protection in large-scale emergencies.
 - ii. Provide and coordinate personnel, equipment, and shelter as required to protect domestic and sick and/or injured nondomestic animals.
 - iii. Manage and staff Companion Animal Mobile Equipment Trailer (CAMET)
 - b. Alexander County Emergency Management
Activate the Emergency Operations Center, if necessary. Responsible for overall direction and control of the emergency incident.
4. Support Agencies
 - a. N.C. Department of Agriculture
The NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services will be responsible for the enforcement of state regulations concerning livestock health and the movements of animals affected by those regulations. NDA will also assist in providing information and direction whenever possible concerning the general health of livestock in these areas.
 - b. American Red Cross:
Provide volunteers to assist in the protection of animals during an emergency shelter situation. Work with environmental service personnel in the coordination of animal shelters in Alexander County.
 - c. Alexander County Cooperative Extension:
Aid in the protection of livestock during an emergency.
 - d. Alexander County Department of Environmental Health:

Coordinate the disposal of deceased animals that may impact the public health. Provide services to control injuries/bites/diseases related to the protection of animals.

5. Additional Resources:
 - a. North Carolina Veterinary Medical Association:
Provide personnel to aid in the medical treatment of animals. Activate regional Veterinary Medical Assistance Teams (VMAT).
 - b. Humane Society of the United States:
Provide personnel and equipment as required to rescue and care for domestic and non-domestic animals.
 - c. American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals:
Provide personnel and equipment as required to rescue and care for domestic and non-domestic animals.
 - d. N. C. Wildlife Resource Commission:
Provide personnel and equipment as required to protect wildlife.
 - e. Private Boarding Kennels, Stables, Dog Clubs, and Horse Clubs:
Provide personnel, equipment, and shelter as required to shelter and care for pets from evacuated citizens and in cases when established animal shelters are filled or destroyed.
 - f. Private Farms:
Provide shelter and supplies to care for displaced livestock.
 - g. Companion Animal Mobile Equipment Trailer (CAMET)
Provides equipment for the care of pets in the event of sheltering or evacuation.

B. Assumptions

1. The owners of pets or livestock, when notified of an upcoming emergency, will take reasonable steps to shelter and provide for animals under their care and/or control.
2. Natural, technological, or man-made disasters could affect the well-being of domesticated or non-domesticated animals.
3. The County should plan both for emergencies and to carry out response and recovery operations utilizing local resources. Outside animal care and rescue assistance would likely be available in most large-scale emergencies affecting the County.
4. Animal protection planning should ensure the proper care and recovery of animals impacted during an emergency. These plans may include measures to identify housing and shelter for animals, communicate information to the public, and proper animal release.
5. Public information statements will be issued through various media outlets. This information will include locations where domestic and nondomestic animals (including livestock and wild animals) may be accepted during emergencies.
6. A large-scale emergency in Alexander County may warrant immediate response from State and local personnel, agencies, and organizations. However, emergency situations may become compounded due to the nature of the emergency and also require activation of additional specialized agencies through mutual aid.
7. Through effective animal protection planning and organization, disaster relief efforts would be more expedient.

III. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A. General

1. The primary and support agencies identified in this Standard Operating Guideline will manage and coordinate local animal protection activities. These agencies will use established animal protection and support organizations, processes, and procedures. Responsibility for situation assessment and determination of resource needs in the event of a large-scale emergency lies primarily with Alexander County Emergency Management in cooperation with the Alexander County Animal Services, Alexander County Department of Environmental Health, and local incident coordinators.
2. Requests for animal protection assistance and resources such as food, medicine, shelter material, specialized personnel, and additional veterinary medical professionals, will be transmitted from the local Emergency Management office to the State Emergency Management office. Should the need for Federal or State resources exist, the State Emergency Operations Center will coordinate the requests for assistance.
3. Animal protection operations will be managed under the Alexander County Incident Command Management System Plan (ICS). Public Health concerns will be managed per appropriate Alexander County Health Department plans and procedures.
4. Animals included under the plan:
 - a. The sheltering and protection of domestic and non-domestic animals (including livestock) are the responsibility of their owners.
 - b. Domestic and nondomestic animals that are lost, strayed, incapable of being cared for by their owners, or in danger to themselves or the public will be the responsibility of Alexander County animal control officials, or other identified agencies. These animals will be sheltered, fed, and, if possible, returned to their owners. If the animals cannot be returned to their owners, they will be disposed of per established animal control procedures.
 - c. Wild animals should be left to their survival instincts. Wild animals out of their natural habitats that are in danger either to themselves or the public will be the responsibility of N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission personnel, in cooperation with local animal control officials, and returned to their natural habitat if possible.

B. Notification

This plan and implementing procedures will be activated in the event of a large-scale emergency causing a significant need for animal protection. The Alexander County Animal Services Director in cooperation with Alexander County Emergency Management will determine when these procedures will be implemented and notify the appropriate primary, support, and mutual aid agencies. A call-down notification system will be maintained by Alexander County Emergency Management in conjunction with the Alexander County Resource Manual.

C. Communications

Communications between the primary and support agencies will occur primarily through telephone, email, and text messaging. Amateur radio will be used as a backup system if other communication is impossible due to the nature of the emergency.

D. Public Information Officer (PIO)

A spokesperson from Alexander County will be responsible for the coordination of all media activities and press releases associated with the protection of animals.

PIO responsibilities may include:

1. Notifying the public of appropriate shelters to drop lost/stray animals, animals that they cannot care for, or animals that need immediate medical assistance.
2. Delivering instructions to the public to prepare their pets for an impending emergency and/or instructions for minor "at home" medical responses for pets injured in an emergency.
3. Initiating a system to direct inquiries on lost pets to the appropriate animal shelters.

E. Response

The owners of pets or livestock, when notified of an emergency, will take all reasonable steps to shelter and provide for animals under their control.

1. Search and Rescue

a. Domestic Pets:

Domestic pets loose or in need of assistance due to the emergency or to the death or evacuation of their owners will be the responsibility of Alexander County animal control officials.

b. Livestock:

Livestock lost or in need of assistance due to the emergency or to the death or evacuation of their owners will be the responsibility of Alexander County animal control officials.

c. Wild Animals:

Wild Animals out of their natural habitat that are endangering either themselves or the human population will be the responsibility of N. C. Wildlife Resource Commission personnel in cooperation with Alexander County Animal Control officials.

d. Stranded Animals:

In the event that animals cannot be rescued due to the emergency situation, food and medical assistance may be delivered to the animals by the appropriate agency when possible.

e. Additional Aid:

In the event that Alexander County Animal Control resources are unable to meet the need for search and rescue personnel, a representative from Alexander County Animal Control Division will request search and rescue assistance from Alexander County Emergency Management and/or Alexander Rescue Squad.

2. Shelters

a. Evacuated Domestic Pets:

i. Private Resources:

- (i) Domestic pets from evacuated citizens will be sheltered at the animal shelter, private boarding kennels and veterinary hospitals.

- (ii) Upon the activation of evacuation shelters for citizens, a representative from the Alexander County Animal Services will be contacted and open up temporary boarding space at the animal shelter.
 - (iii) Each of the citizens' evacuation shelters will have an available veterinary volunteer on the premises as possible to evaluate the pets of evacuated citizens. Pets with significant injuries or illnesses will be transported to an animal hospital designated for the medical treatment of animals.
 - (iv) A representative of Alexander County Animal Control will be responsible for ensuring the transportation of the evacuated pets to either the shelter facility or hospital and in ensuring that a tracking system is in place to unite sheltered pets with their rightful owners.
- ii. Animal Evacuation Shelter:

If the need arises, the County may open an evacuated pet shelter. Pets of evacuated citizens will be transported to this shelter as citizens arrive with their pets at the citizen's evacuation shelters.
- iii. Evacuated Citizens with Special Needs
 - (i) Citizens with special needs (individuals with mental or physical handicaps who require evacuation assistance) may require assistance in evacuating their pets.
 - (ii) If special needs individuals are unwilling or unable to make special arrangements for the sheltering of their pets, then the individuals and their pets will be transported to the evacuation shelter. Upon arrival at the shelter, pets not trained specifically to assist the individual (e.g., seeing-eye dogs) will be transported to the animal shelter for temporary housing, private boarding facility or another appropriate facility. If the individual and the pet cannot be separated due to the individual's infirmity, the pet will be sheltered in the same facility in a separate room or area.
- b. Stray/Lost Domestic Pets

All stray/lost domestic pets recovered by Alexander County Animal Control will be sheltered at the Alexander County Animal Shelter.

Any pets whose owners cannot care for their pets or domestic pets found by citizens will also be sheltered at these locations. Private boarding kennels and veterinarian shelters will serve as overflow shelters and will be requested to open through the Alexander County Animal Services representative as necessary. Unclaimed animals will be disposed of according to county procedures.
- c. Evacuated and Stray/Lost Livestock:

Due to the size of most livestock and the inability to transport large numbers of farm animals, owners are expected to develop shelter and/or evacuation plans for their own animals.

Also, private farms located throughout the county may be used as shelter facilities for livestock. In the event of an emergency situation, Alexander County Cooperative Extension will contact prearranged farms and request their assistance in the sheltering operation.
- d. Wild Animals:

If possible, wild animals outside of their natural habitat endangering the public will be transported back to their natural habitat. If the responsible agencies are unable to transport the animal back to its natural habitat due to the nature of the emergency or to injuries that the animal may have sustained, the animals will either be transported to the Alexander County Animal Control for shelter or medical treatment or disposed of per established animal control procedures.

e. Incapacitation of Shelters

If established shelters are destroyed or incapable of functioning due to the nature of the emergency private boarding kennels, veterinarian hospitals, and stables may be requested to open as boarding and/or medical facilities. In rare cases, during large-scale emergencies, animals may be moved outside Alexander County for care and protection.

f. Staff/Supplies

a. Staff:

- i. Private boarding kennels and veterinarian hospitals will be responsible for the staffing of their boarding facilities and will be compensated by the citizens who use the animal shelter according to the established policies of the animal shelter.
- ii. Remaining animal shelters and hospitals will be staffed with available personnel from Alexander County Animal Control and with volunteer veterinarians and veterinary assistants. These shelters, in cooperation with the Alexander County Animal Services will develop and routinely update lists of available veterinarian and veterinarian assistant volunteers.
- iii. Each animal shelter will be responsible for developing the work schedules for employees and volunteers.

b. Supplies:

- i. Each animal shelter will identify resources for potable water, food, medical, cleaning, and shelter supplies in advance of an emergency. Prearranged domestic and nondomestic animal food companies, medical suppliers, water suppliers, and cleaning product suppliers will be contacted and requested to begin the shipment of supplies to an established delivery point. The delivery point will serve as a storage center and a distribution center for the various shelters and hospitals.
- ii. If the need arises, resource agencies (e.g., kennel clubs) may be requested to donate cages and other various shelter supplies.

c. Medical

- i. Hospitals: The Alexander County Animal Control will coordinate the resources for a medical facility for domestic animals that cannot be accommodated by the various shelters due to the animals' injuries. Private veterinary hospitals may serve as alternative medical facilities and medical shelters as space permits.
- ii. Staff: Volunteers from the veterinarian hospitals and others will assist in providing medical care in these medical shelters. Depending on the extent of the emergency, volunteers or Veterinary Medical Assistance Teams from the American Veterinary Medical Association may be requested to assist in the medical treatment of domestic and non-domestic animals.

- d. Bites/Disease Control
 - i. The Alexander County Health Department will make available to rescue and shelter personnel minimal or no-cost vaccinations and will ensure that treatment of bites and injuries is available to affected persons.
 - ii. Outbreaks of rabies are a serious threat during an emergency. Appropriate steps to control that threat will be implemented by the Alexander County Health Department.

F. Recovery

- 1. Release/Destruction
 - a. Domestic Pets/Livestock
 - i. Alexander County Animal Control will support efforts to identify owners of stray/lost animals. If owners cannot be found, Alexander County Animal Control representatives will attempt to adopt or sell the animals according to their established procedures.
 - ii. Animals for which no owners can be found and which cannot be placed in adoptive care or sold will be disposed of per established animal control procedures.
 - b. Wild Animals:
 - i. Alexander County Animal Control in cooperation with the N.C. Wildlife Commission will support efforts to reintroduce wild animals back to their natural habitats.
- 2. Disposal of Animal Carcasses:
 - a. Disposal of deceased animals will be the responsibility of the Alexander County Department of Environmental Services. They will arrange for the disposal of:
 - i. Euthanized animals
 - ii. Animals killed in the emergency.

IV. REVIEW AND UPDATE

Regularly, this procedure will be reviewed and updated as appropriate by the Alexander County Animal Services and Alexander County Emergency Management.