Emergency Animal Sheltering During Coronavirus Disease Pandemic

Joint Statement

We recognize that many Americans will not evacuate without their pets and given that many families have been staying home full time, the bond between humans and their animals will likely be stronger than ever. As such, the National Animal Rescue and Sheltering Coalition (NARSC) in conjunction with the American Red Cross is providing guidance intended to ensure jurisdictions are aware of planning changes necessary to meet the extra burden in cleaning, staffing and logistics during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. This guidance document outlines planning and resource needs to effectively manage pet and animal emergency sheltering during the 2020 disaster season.

Planning Assumptions

1.   Historical disaster experience has demonstrated that the human/animal bond is strong; many people will not heed emergency management orders to evacuate and seek shelter if they cannot bring their animals with them.

2.   COVID-19 will be a factor in responding to natural and manmade disasters occurring in 2020.

3.   Emergency sheltering for natural and manmade disasters during the current pandemic will require social distancing to safeguard people seeking shelter.

4.   Many Red Cross and animal shelter volunteers are in COVID-vulnerable demographics (over age 60, or with pre-existing conditions), and may not be willing or able to support disaster responses.

5.   State or agency travel restrictions may preclude out-of-state responders from responding.

6.   For everyone's safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, the goal is to mitigate the risk of exposure:

- Shelter staffing will be minimal to protect everyone's health
- Shelter practices will be adapted to reduce exposure risk

American Red Cross Shelter Model During COVID-19 Pandemic

The virus that causes COVID-19 usually spreads from close person-to-person contact. For the Red Cross, that means reducing the number of close person-to-person encounters necessary to accomplish the mission and mitigating the risk to clients and workforce when those close encounters are mission critical. Consequently, while COVID-19 remains a public health threat, the Red Cross will conduct much of its disaster relief work virtually and will limit its footprint of in-person responders to provide life-sustaining emergency shelter/lodging in response to disasters.

Red Cross prioritization of evacuee sheltering is currently:

1. Pet Friendly Hotels
2. Smaller Shelters--with few clients if feasible to mitigate COViD-19 risk
3. Large Evacuation Centers - when the only immediately available option

Congregate sheltering as usually seen in disasters requires close person-to-person contact. Working with partners, the Red Cross will seek and utilize non-congregate settings for sheltering and, whenever possible, work to secure pet friendly hotels.

Congregate sheltering may still be in use during sudden onset disasters. However, once immediate life safety considerations have subsided, non-congregate and smaller shelter situations will be the priority for the safety of clients.

Changes in supporting evacuees with animals, include planning and strategies for:

- Supporting evacuees with animals in a hotel setting
- Supporting a distributed set of smaller shelters, with animals collocated or offsite
- Sheltering animals with minimal close person-to-person encounters

People will not be turned away in an emergency if they arrive with a pet, though the priority will be to move those pets and people to other facilities as outlined above, as soon as possible once the danger has passed.

Planning for Animal Sheltering Changes During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Jurisdictions will need to plan and resource pet sheltering in their community for changes due to the COVID-19 virus. As described above, the Red Cross is changing its sheltering operations to ensure safe sheltering for staff and individuals requiring assistance, and likely non-Red Cross human shelters will alter their operations, as well. It is important for jurisdictions to understand the changes and work with NARSC, the Red Cross and other local pet partners to adapt their planning for animal sheltering under these new conditions. Before we get into these planning considerations, it is helpful to review the four types of emergency animal sheltering options that jurisdictions can provide animal owners in their communities during natural disasters.

- **Hotel**--In this situation, a family's pets would live in the hotel room and be cared for by their owners. A jurisdiction would need to support this pet sheltering by ensuring there are animal care supplies, such as bowls, litter boxes, cages or crates, food, litter and bedding, since many people evacuate quickly and are unable to bring those supplies with them.
- **Cohabitated shelter**--animals live in the same living area as their family, side by side. Dogs have cages or crates to sleep in and at other times in which family members are not able to directly supervise them. Cats, birds, small mammals, etc., are also kept in cages or crates. Pet owners take care of their own pets, including feeding, watering, and walking. **A shelter monitor is needed to identify and manage any issues arising from the animals.** Jurisdictions need to have a plan for animals that cannot be accepted or remain in the shelter, such as aggressive animals. The pros of choosing cohabitated sheltering are that this sheltering model keeps people with their pets, gives the most comfort to the owners and their animals, and requires the least amount of staffing to manage the animals, lessening the burden on the jurisdiction. The cons are that they may require more space per family unit than human-only sheltering.
- **Collocated shelter**--animals live in an adjacent or nearby area from where the people shelter. This separate area can be a separate room(s) in the same building as the human shelter, or a nearby separate building. As with cohabitated sheltering, pet owners take care of their own pets, but they need to go to where the collocated shelter is in order to do this. Staff is needed to care for the animals of people who cannot take care of their own animals, due to the owners' health or mobility issues--which may range from 20-50%, depending on the human shelter population and the proximity of the animal area to the human shelter area. Staff is also needed to conduct intake, release, as well as to check in owners who come to care for their animals. The pros of a collocated shelter are that the animal owners are still (relatively) near their animals and provide for their care, thus still providing some comfort to animals and their families; and collocated shelters do not require as much staffing as a stand-alone animal shelter (see below). The cons are that any distance between people and their animals still results in stress for animals and their people. Additionally, this physical distance also results in a significant number of owners being unable to care for their pets (because they cannot manage the distance) and as a result, more staffing is needed to take care of these animals. In a COVID-19 shelter layout, the traditional collocated shelter footprint would need to be adapted to allow for social distancing.
- **Animal-only shelter**--animals are kept entirely apart from their owners, in an off-site building separate from the human shelter. Pet owners do not take care of their pets; rather, the animals need to be taken care of by a separate animal care staff. The pros of this shelter, when used in conjunction with either a cohabitated or collocated shelter, are that they provide a viable option to separate animals that are medically or behaviorally not suited for housing in a cohabitated or collocated shelter. In a COVID-19 environment, animal-only sheltering also would limit the humans to those personnel (staff or volunteers) assigned to care for the animals. The cons are that animals are completely separated from their families--this results in immense stress on the owners and the animals. These shelters require the most staffing to care for animals, because

3

the owners have no role in caring for their animals. Finally, stand-alone animal-only shelters see the highest rates of abandoned or surrendered animals, thus breaking those families' bond with their pets, resulting in the jurisdiction having to find placement for these animals when the shelter closes.

Given that one of the largest COVID-19 challenges that jurisdictions (and the Red Cross and other sheltering groups) face in disaster sheltering is staffing, if hotel capacity is exceeded and emergency shelters will be opened, jurisdictions should consider cohabitated sheltering. These cohabitated shelters--especially the smaller shelter model may be able to get by with a single animal monitor (unless the jurisdiction expects a higher amount of pet owners or a higher amount of people who are unable to care for their own animals). The added space per family that is already going to be required because of COVID-19 provides even more "cushion" between families. Because of the benefits to people and their animals from cohabitated sheltering, the minimal staff needed, and the extra space already required due to COVID-19, this is the ideal time to consider cohabitated sheltering.

If the Red Cross will not provide shelter management for cohabitated shelters, NARSC suggests that jurisdictions consider their own resources to provide shelter management for cohabitated shelter areas, locate cohabitated shelters near Red Cross general population shelters, and seek support from Red Cross for meals and other services for the human population in the cohabitated shelter.

If cohabitated sheltering is not feasible for a jurisdiction, then collocated sheltering is the next best choice, mainly due to more comfort to the pet owners and animals, as well as the reality that the jurisdiction will end up with fewer surrendered or abandoned animals. For jurisdictions that rely on animal welfare groups and volunteers to care for animals in their collocated shelters, they will need to work now on sourcing those volunteers locally. National groups and even local/regional animal welfare groups often rely on volunteers who might not be willing to risk travel or exposure to COVID-19 to deploy with their group to the disaster. In this case, the staff needed to care for the animals and manage the collocated shelters will need to come from the community. In hard hit COVID-19 areas, local volunteer resources may be scarce and requests for assistance may need to be made via local Emergency Management up to the State Emergency Operations Center for additional assistance.

Balancing Disaster Responder Staffing in Congregate Settings

Smaller shelters reduce the transmission of disease by creating smaller clusters of people interacting with each other. Each shelter building, however, has a minimum number of required staffing and supplies to meet client needs. The smaller distributed shelter model uses more responders to support, as it takes more health care workers, more vehicles, more facility agreements, more janitorial contracts, and widespread supply delivery routing.

This increase in staffing is also reflected in animal emergency sheltering response. FEMA provides guidance for minimal staffing of emergency animal shelters:

For 100 animals:

- Cohabitated - 4 workers
- Collocated - 7 workers
- Animal Only - 9 workers

As shown, the number of animal responders increase as clients are less involved in caring for their animals. Cohabitated sheltering has many benefits and requires minimal animal responders; however, it requires a contingency plan to relocate and care for any animals that are not suitable for housing in a cohabitated shelter. Such animals may include those with behavioral, medical, or special care needs; exotic species; those whose owners are unable or unwilling to care for their animals; or others that create disruption within the cohabitated shelter. These animals may need to be housed in a separate location within the shelter footprint, or at an animal-only emergency shelter, or by utilizing space at the community's animal shelter or veterinary/boarding facilities.

In planning how to approach animal sheltering in a COVID-19 environment, there are many factors to consider within each jurisdiction, including types and numbers of animals in your jurisdiction, available facilities, proximity between facilities, transportation (potentially for humans, if collocated shelter is not within easy walking distance of human shelter; and animals), supply delivery, available staffing, tracking volunteers, veterinary support, reunification strategies, and abandonment mitigation, and collecting and maintaining source documentation for animal sheltering if seeking reimbursement from FEMA for animal care and sheltering activities.

With many factors to consider, it will be necessary to balance workforce and volunteer limitations, public health benefits, and logistics during discussions within the jurisdiction's Mass Care ESF-6 and Agriculture and Natural Resources ESF-11/ESF-17, or other appropriate emergency support functions (ESFs).

Additional Planning Factors for COVID-19

There are well-developed reference documents for the following types of emergency animal shelters:

- Cohabitated - State of Louisiana Cohabitated Sheltering Toolkit
- Collocated/Animal Only - National Alliance of State Animal and Agricultural Emergency Programs (NASAAEP) Emergency Animal Sheltering Best Practices

In addition to what is outlined in the documents, additional planning factors required by COVID-19 should be considered to keep your workforce and clients healthy. These can be found in Appendix A.

Best Practices for Animal Sheltering in a COVID-19 Environment

Cohabitated animal sheltering puts the responsibility for caring for animals on the animal owner. Jurisdictions should be prepared to provide the following:

- **Equipment** (crates, litter pans, bowls, leashes, etc.) and consumable supplies (food, water, litter, bedding, poop bags, cleaning supplies, etc.) to augment what the owners bring with them and to ensure the animal sheltering is accomplished safely;
- **Minimal monitoring by animal care staff** to ensure owners are humanely caring for their animals and the animals are not creating disruption or other issues in the cohabitated shelter setting; triage on intake to ensure that animals who should not be in cohabitated housing are sheltered elsewhere; off-site veterinary care; and
- **A contingency plan** for animal care for animals not suited to cohabitated sheltering.

In essence, the jurisdiction is planning for and providing the essential supplies and services the animal owner would normally have access to in non-disaster times, and the burden of care is on the owner to provide for their animal. Because of this, cohabitated animal sheltering requires minimal staff support and, with appropriate guidelines, limits interactions between people in the shelter setting.

Beyond the need to reduce close person-to-person contact, it is also important to create a plan utilizing the [Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines](#) for social distancing for animal responders, and for cleaning and disinfection that is safe around animals. It is also important to note that there may be increased cleaning and disinfection procedures and site guidance that may need to be shared with staff, volunteers, and owners to emphasize personal responsibility and inform staff, volunteers, and owners how to help facilitate a clean environment for themselves and their pets in a COVID-19 shelter environment.

Staffing

- Assign a consistent shelter team to provide daily animal care, and avoid switching team members between rotations, to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Each team should only work together and not come in contact with other teams. (If one team has a member get sick, then the other teams would still be able to work.) Identifying alternates as a back-up for each team is a best practice. It is important to keep common areas, break rooms, eating locations etc. in mind when defining this rotation schedule and to include cleaning best practices in these locales to facilitate biosecurity efforts.
- Maintain a roster of trained surge staff and provide them with the necessary training
- Potentially double-staff key positions in case someone falls ill
- Consider work that can be accomplished virtually (offsite) with technology, such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Skype or phone
- Inform staff that they should not come to work if they feel sick, have a temperature or have come in contact with anyone who is sick

Health and Safety

- Screen personnel arriving at the facility for COVID-19 symptoms prior to entry, including the taking of temperature at the entrance
- Ensure Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), alternative protective wear such as cloth face coverings, signage, and hand sanitizer is available and used appropriately

Cleaning and Disinfection

- Ensure enhanced cleaning and disinfection processes are in place, to include all shelter areas, shared use tools and equipment
- Provide hand sanitizer and access to sinks with soap/water to everyone working
- Cleaning and disinfection in the shelter can be performed with commonly used disinfectants, such as quaternary cleaners, bleach, or commercial disinfectants such as Rescue. Check the EPA list of approved products to ensure that the product you are using is effective against SARS CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. This list can be found in the Reference section below.
- Refer to cleaning and disinfection guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) to develop cleaning and disinfection protocols for your emergency animal shelter

Layout and Spacing

- Create larger spacing of sheltering layout, so staff and clients can sit, stand, eat and sleep six feet apart to prevent the spread of germs
- Implement exposure reduction measures, such as barrier controls, for any areas where lines of clients may form
- Staff should maintain social distancing (6 feet apart) and wear masks when working in the shelter environment
- Stagger breaks and set up break areas in a way to allow six feet between people
- Meals should be provided in individual servings instead of buffet style. Serve pre-packaged meals or individual meals dispensed by food service workers when possible.

Animal Care Considerations

- To the extent possible, set up separate housing areas for different species
- If possible, for collocated or animal-only shelters, set up the shelter with pods (smaller grouping of animals separated from other animal areas either by space or perimeters) with each pod containing only the number of animals one person can clean (or two people, if using crates with walkers). This team should be assigned the same shifts and work together as much as possible
- Procure enough supplies to keep tools and cleaning supplies to specific animals/areas; equipment for cleaning and caring for the animals should stay in each pod to mitigate surface disease spread. Label, color code, or use other markings to help identify supplies for designated locations

Veterinary Medical Care

- In the COVID-19 environment, veterinary medical care should be available outside of the shelter dormitory area to minimize in-shelter staffing and mitigate person-to-person contact. In collocated or animal-only shelters, care should be taken to determine the best option for setting up veterinary medical care considering both human and animal health, and the available facility characteristics.
- As part of the shelter intake process, set up an area (outside of the shelter dormitory footprint) for veterinary triage/pretreatment (which ideally occurs prior to animals entering the shelter)
- Establish access to veterinary care apart from shelter dormitory areas, to address medical issues as they arise. Animals should be handed off from shelter staff to veterinary support staff for exams (for example, use a holding pen for shelter staff to place the animal for pick up by vet support staff, to maintain social distancing between shelter and veterinary staff).   Generally, owners should not have free access to veterinary staff at the shelter, to mitigate disease transmission.
- Maintain a consistent Veterinary Team, and keep team rotation to a minimum to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. If possible, identify back-up providers in case the Veterinary Team members become compromised.
- If using multiple veterinary teams, all equipment should be disinfected between shifts
- Veterinary records or medical information should be kept electronically, to the extent possible
- If you don't already have veterinary support, consider partnering with private veterinary hospitals, animal shelters with veterinary capability, or veterinary schools to provide veterinary oversight of shelter operations and animal triage/treatment/care

Strategies (listed by shelter type):

Hotel

- Be prepared to supply animal owners with crates, food bowls, food, collars, and leashes (for dogs), and litter plans and litter (for cats)
- If you don't already maintain food and supplies for other animals, arrange to quickly procure appropriate caging, bedding, food, etc., for other pets (small mammals, birds, reptiles, etc.)
- Set up an ordering/delivery system so pet owners staying in hotels can restock supplies as needed
- Set up continuity of care plans for animals that can't remain unattended in the hotel room if the owner needs to go out
- Be prepared to transfer medically or behaviorally unsuitable pets to animal-only shelters (or board at a veterinary facility) if needed
- Make arrangements for sheltering horses and backyard livestock, to support owners sheltering in hotels
- Assign volunteers to check in with American Red Cross and people with pets sheltering in hotels to regularly monitor and troubleshoot issues

- Set up off-site veterinary support for animals requiring care

Smaller Shelters
- In an effort to conserve staff and resources, balance the number of pet-friendly shelters to use the minimum number required to ensure all people with pets have a place to shelter safely
- If possible, separate people with animals by species (one shelter location for cats, one for dogs, one for people with both, etc.). This is better for the animal as less stress is involved. If not possible, keep as much space between dogs and cats as possible.
- Separate areas should be set-up for behaviorally and medically challenging animals
- May be more difficult to find sheltering areas as the number of human shelter locations increases; multiple tents or trailers may be needed
- House animals in climate-controlled areas, to the extent possible
- When possible, assign staff team to work in a single shelter location to eliminate risk of anything spreading from one shelter location to another
- Be prepared to supply pet owners with crates, food bowls, food, collars and leashes (for dogs), and litter plans and litter (for cats)
- If you don't already maintain food and supplies for other animals, arrange to quickly procure appropriate caging, bedding, food, etc., for other pets (small mammals, birds, reptiles, etc.)
- Ensure each shelter with animals has access to a cache of supplies to support the animals housed at the shelter
- Make arrangements for sheltering horses and backyard livestock, if appropriate to your jurisdiction
- Provide as much support as possible virtually or off-site. Maintain minimal staff in each shelter to monitor and troubleshoot issues
- Plan for veterinary triage, routine veterinary rounds in the shelter, and off-site veterinary treatment and support for animals requiring care
- If using collocated sheltering, have families set appointments to visit or care for their animals to ensure social distancing can be practiced

Large Evacuation Shelter
- Use cohabitated sheltering, when feasible, if the shelter is large enough to create separate areas for people with animals and people without animals
- Consider collocated or stand-alone animal sheltering if a shelter has a single dormitory area. If you have multiple large evacuation shelters, you could opt to designate one for people with animals (cohabitated) and one for people without animals.
- Conduct intake in a manner to maintain social distancing and minimize human interaction
- Be prepared to supply pet owners with crates, food bowls, food, collars and leashes (for dogs), and litter plans and litter (for cats)

- If you don't already maintain food and supplies for other animals, arrange to quickly procure appropriate caging, bedding, food, etc., for other pets (small mammals, birds, reptiles, etc.)
- Be prepared to transfer medically or behaviorally unsuitable pets to animal-only shelter (or board at a veterinary facility) if needed
- Make arrangements for sheltering horses and backyard livestock, if appropriate to your jurisdiction
- Provide as much support as possible virtually or off-site. Maintain minimal staff in the evacuation shelter to monitor and troubleshoot issues
- Plan for veterinary triage, routine veterinary rounds in the shelter, and off-site veterinary treatment and support for animals requiring care
- If using collocated sheltering, have set "appointments" for families to visit/care for their animals. This will give greater control over what happens and the number of people in the collocated animal area of the shelter at any given time
- Work with Red Cross on future planning to factor animal sheltering needs in transition planning to smaller shelters

Animal Only Shelter

- Staffing is crucial for stand-alone animal shelters, and this type of sheltering requires the greatest numbers of staff. Begin planning immediately on how your jurisdiction will find sufficient numbers of staff to care for the animals. If you face staffing shortages due to COVID-19, possible sources of staffing include Animal Control officers, staff and volunteers from local animal shelters, humane societies, animal rescues, veterinary technicians or assistants, or animal agriculture. You can request additional resources through Emergency Management if needed.
- The Shelter Manager is a key position and must be filled with someone experienced in running an animal shelter
- Shelter Leads, such as for Intake/Reunification and Daily Care, are essential. If you can find experienced people to fill these roles, it makes it much easier to assimilate less-experienced volunteers into these teams.
- Assign a Medical Director to oversee veterinary care for the animals, and to ensure there is a schedule of veterinarians and veterinary technicians to provide veterinary medical care as needed and to assess the health of the animals on a daily basis.

Where to Find Resources

1. Connect emergency management, American Red Cross, other human services providers, and animal service providers to review Red Cross plans for sheltering in your jurisdiction. (Hotel capacity varies widely across the country, and that will affect local sheltering plans during the coronavirus pandemic.)
2. Check your emergency operational plan for animals and assess what resources you have to support animal sheltering, based on the Red Cross shelter strategy.
3. Check the status of your staff and volunteers in the COVID-19 environment.

4. If you face personnel or resource shortfalls, check with adjoining jurisdictions (or nearby agencies) to see if you can set up reciprocity agreements. Document all animal services through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with each service provider. Make an official request to Emergency Management.
5. Collaborate with animal shelters, rescue groups, veterinary hospitals, pet boarding facilities, pet groomers, colleges and universities with veterinary and animal-related programs, agriculture, and other animal-related businesses to fill personnel gaps locally.
6. Ensure all agencies and organizations providing support have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the local emergency management agency to facilitate seeking reimbursement of expenses, as appropriate. (FEMA will reimburse certain expenses associated with animal care and sheltering provided by organizations working under MOU with emergency management, during federally declared disasters.)
7. Remember to reach out to state Emergency Management if you are unable to fill personnel or resource gaps.
8. Contact NARSC if you need assistance in planning or adapting your emergency animal sheltering plan.

NARSC Shelter Support in a COVID-19 Environment

NARSC agencies often provide on-site personnel to assist states in their emergency animal sheltering. This is done via NARSC or agency MOU relationships with states. However, in the COVID-19 environment, NARSC agencies, like everyone else will face challenges with providing on-site shelter personnel.

- Due to state or agency travel restrictions or challenges with volunteers being willing to deploy in the COVID-19 environment, NARSC may not be able to provide on-site personnel to assist with emergency animal sheltering
- NARSC can provide remote training for Shelter Managers and Leads through a webinar
- NARSC personnel will be available for remote technical assistance and advice as your jurisdiction works through its planning
- NARSC personnel will be available for remote technical advice and assistance during disaster sheltering operations
- NARSC personnel will work through the National Alliance of State Animal and Agricultural Emergency Programs (NASAAEP) to help connect you with your state ESF 11/17 Lead or other emergency management personnel, if needed

To reach NARSC for assistance with planning, or for "live" help by phone during your sheltering operation, please contact narscshelteringhelp@gmail.com, or 904-863-5198.

Job Aids

- Checklist for COVID-19 Adaptations to Emergency Animal Shelters—Appendix A
- Animal Care Monitor Position Description (for cohabitated shelters)--Appendix B
- Animal Care Monitor Checklist (for cohabitated shelters)--Appendix C

References

- American Veterinary Medical Association
  - Main COVID-19 Page https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19
  - Interim Recommendations for intake of companion animals from households where humans with COVID-19 are present https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/animal-health-and-welfare/covid-19/interim-recommendations-intake-companion-animals-households-humans-COVID-19-are-present
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
  - COVID-19 and Animals Web Page and Resources: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/animals.html
  - Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities - Interim Recommendations for U.S. Community Facilities with Suspected/Confirmed COVID-19: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html
  - Interim Guidance for Public Health Officials Managing People With COVID-19 in Home Health Care and Isolation Who Have Pets: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/interim-guidance-managing-people-in-home-care-and-isolation-who-have-pets.html
  - Guidance for General Population Disaster Shelters: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/Guidance-for-Gen-Pop-Disaster-Shelters-a-Pandemic_cleared_JIC_ADS_final.pdf
- Environmental Protection Agency
  - Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2: https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
  - FEMA Resource Typing Library Toolkit — Animal Shelter Teams, Positions: https://rtlt.preptoolkit.fema.gov/Public/Combined?q=animal
- National Alliance of State Animal and Agricultural Emergency Programs (NASAAEP)
  - Emergency Animal Sheltering Best Practices http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Emergency-Response/bpwg/NASAAEP-Sheltering-whitepaper.pdf
- National Mass Care Strategy
  - National Mass Care Strategy Pets Resources: https://nationalmasscarestrategy.org/household-pets/
- State of Louisiana
  - Cohabitated Pet Sheltering Toolkit: http://www.ldaf.state.la.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Cohabitated-Human-Pet-Sheltering-Toolkit-v-19-07.23.2018.pdf

Appendix A
Checklist for COVID-19 Adaptations to Emergency Animal Sheltering

This disaster season will be especially challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic and will impact emergency sheltering operations. Here are the main ways in which a sheltering agency should adapt their plans and operations.

All Sheltering Types

Staffing
- Confirm availability of personnel now and recruit to fill gaps--many organizations, especially volunteer-based, may not be able to help in the way you have relied on them before. The solution--staff locally and begin reaching out now.
- Staff and volunteer food should be served in individualized meals; or, if a buffet, have servers serve the food

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Screening Equipment
- Due to overwhelming demand for PPE worldwide, it is important to begin building your supply of masks and latex/vinyl gloves immediately
- Obtain touch-free thermometers to take temperatures
- Consider obtaining face shields or plexiglass barriers for high contact positions, such as Intake
- Add mobile handwashing stations throughout the shelter if there aren't readily available bathrooms throughout

Social Distancing
- Social distancing should be built into the shelter plan so that people can remain 6' apart while doing their duties or taking care of their pets
- Staff and volunteer breakroom/areas should be set up to provide for social distancing
- Set up the veterinary medical area away from where the animals are housed to reduce the number of outside people having to enter the housing area. As much as possible, take the animal to the veterinary area rather than have the vet team walk in to treat the animal.
- Develop a well-marked dog-walking route to encourage walkers to walk one-way along a path in the dog walking area and a separate route mapped for return to the shelter space

Minimize Outside Visitors/Ensure Compliance with COVID-19 Protocols

- To the extent possible, minimize the number of people entering the shelter area to minimize the chance of outside infection. For example, outside deliveries should be received outside the shelter where possible.
- All staff, volunteers, and residents/visitors should be briefed on the COVID-19 protections/protocols as part of their orientation, and the appropriate people under ICS should monitor to ensure compliance
- Cloth masks should be worn by all people in the shelter (unless there is a medical reason they cannot wear a mask)
- Ensure you have sufficient masks and gloves for staff, volunteers, and residents
- Set up your donation area outside of the shelter area
- Follow CDC guidelines for disinfecting common areas on a routine basis, and extra consideration should be paid to bathroom areas
- If using coolers for drinks, instruct people to wash their hands before reaching in for a drink, and also to wipe the bottle top prior to drinking
- Identify a cadre of drivers to transport equipment and supplies to the shelter and animals to off-site veterinary care or other off-site services, as needed.
- Set up an area outside of the shelter to receive equipment/supplies and hand-off securely contained pets/animals for transport

Intake and Records

- Screen people seeking shelter for COVID-19
- Register incoming animals
    - Intake will need special care to set up to provide social distancing, and we recommend a plexiglass barrier (similar to grocery stores) between the intake team and shelter clients registering their animals, or face shields for intake personnel
    - Electronic recordkeeping is preferable to paper records
- Triage animals for medical or behavioral issues to determine appropriate shelter housing placement
    - Screen for SARS-CoV-2 exposure for pets on intake to allow for housing protocols to be implemented

Adaptations by Shelter Type

What follows below are specific adaptations needed depending on the particular type of shelter.

Cohabitated

- The suggested footprint for a family of 4 with 2 pets in normal times is 180 square feet (about 13' x 13') and this remains the same. If you have the space, consider adding more room in between family units.

- Consider alternative housing options like college dormitories, military barracks, school classrooms and hotels
- Animal Care Monitors, when circulating among the shelter, should maintain social distancing with the residents
- Develop a plan for managing pets/animals if a human shelter resident tests positive or comes down with symptoms of COVID-19

Collocated

- Consider setting up a system to ensure social distancing for family members when they come visit and/or take care of their pets. This could include an appointment system, or a calibration of visitors by the Intake staff.
- Use a "pod" system of cage arrangement to minimize the number of different people entering a cage area
- If possible, space the animal cages 6' apart to allow for social distancing when people are visiting their animals or staff/volunteers are cleaning cages
- Develop a plan for managing pets/animals, as well as staff, if a shelter resident tests positive or comes down with symptoms of COVID-19 and has interacted with people at the co-located shelter

Animal Only

- If you are using a preexisting animal shelter building with built-in kennels and cages, evaluate the facility and develop a plan to create social distance within the existing structure
- If you are not using a preexisting shelter facility, evaluate the facility and develop a shelter plan that allows for social distancing of the staff and the animals. Some examples are
  - A "pod" system of cage arrangement to minimize the number of personnel entering each pod
  - If setting up cages are in rows, space the animal cages 6' apart to allow for social distancing for personnel when they are providing daily care
- Consider whether you will allow owners to visit their pets. If you will allow owners to visit their animals, develop a clear policy that protects the pet owners, the shelter personnel, and the animals.

Appendix B
Animal Care Monitor (Cohabitated Shelter)
Job Description

Overall Function

The Animal Care Monitor (Cohabitated Shelter) oversees the proper care and handling of animals by their owners in situations where the bulk of shelter and veterinary support services are provided virtually or off-site from the cohabitated shelter. The Animal Care Monitor has experience in one or more of the following competency areas:

1. Companion animals, including pets, service animals, and assistance animals
2. Livestock, including food or fiber animals and domesticated equine species

Assignment

This position should be used to staff a cohabitated shelter (where shelter clients are housed with their pets/animals and are wholly responsible for their animal's care) in situations where a full complement of animal sheltering and veterinary staff are not physically present in the animal shelter to mitigate risk from COVID-19, and are managing shelter operations remotely and providing veterinary support virtually through telemedicine (if permitted) or off-site.

Assign one Animal Care Monitor per 50-person cohabitated shelter; be prepared to assign additional support depending on shelter animal census and needs.

Description of Duties

The Animal Care Monitor:

1. Coordinates with incident command; coordinates all facets of the animal response and intersecting components of the human response in the shelter
2. Serves as liaison to human shelter manager and off-site animal services
3. Serves as point of contact for pet/animal owners and assists them in getting needed supplies and services
4. Circulates and checks animal welfare, identifies issues or developing problems, and helps resolve issues (using off-site resources, when needed)
5. Oversees that owners are meeting animals' basic welfare needs
6. Monitors, reports, and seeks off-site guidance as appropriate to resolve issues/situations involving animals housed in the facility
7. Ensures safety and biosecurity protocols, sanitation procedures, general upkeep related to animals in the shelter

8. Ensures owner compliance with shelter rules
9. Administers basic treatments (flea treatment, wormers, etc.) when owner is unable to do so
10. Helps identify unmet resource needs and allocates resources to support shelter animal care
11. Reports animal numbers (census)
12. Ensures proper animal identification, tracking, reunification, and reporting

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities Needed

1. Ability to communicate effectively with others to achieve desired outcomes
2. Ability to manage multiple priorities, tasks, and teams simultaneously; organize work and activities; and assign tasks and communicate instructions to animal owners and external animal support teams
3. General operational knowledge of logistical support systems or procedures, and available resources (shelter and animal branch leadership, veterinary resources, etc.) some of which may be available virtually
4. Knowledge of support and operational functions used in the type of shelter operated, to include, at a minimum: administration and record keeping; shelter reporting systems; registration and records; feeding; dormitory operations; security and crowd management; and public health, medical health, and mental health services
5. Routinely demonstrates the ability to work with animals; required skills include:
   a. Behavioral assessment
   b. Capture and containment
   c. Basic daily care
   d. Restraint for procedures
   e. Safe and humane handling

Pre-Requisite Training
1. IS-100: Introduction to the Incident Command System, ICS-100
2. IS-200: Basic Incident Command System for Initial Response, ICS-200
3. IS-700: National Incident Management System, An Introduction
4. IS-800: National Response Framework, An Introduction

Job Conditions

1. Work is performed in an emergency cohabitated animal shelter which may be located indoors or outdoors (at a fairgrounds, etc.), and may require some animal handling to assist owners in caring for their animals.
2. The Animal Care Monitor may be required to work while wearing appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and should be current on basic immunizations.

Appendix C
Animal Care Monitor Checklist
Cohabitated Shelter Operations

All shelter workers report through the Incident Command Structure (ICS) or a similar structure. Using this structure, the shelter has a single person in charge, the Shelter Manager, who is responsible for all that happens on-site. As an Animal Care Monitor, you will report to the Shelter Manager and will be supported by off-site animal field support. In larger operations, depending on the number of animals, a set of Animal Care Monitors and other animal disaster responders may report to an on-site Animal Emergency Response Team Leader who then reports to the Shelter Manager.

The following is an overview to ensure that you are ready to support cohabitated pets in the shelter.

- **Understand your time commitment.** Shifts are normally twelve hours and run from 7 AM to 7 PM. Shelter workers are usually scheduled for five to no more than fourteen days, with a day off after six working days.
- **Complete a background check.** To work in dormitory areas of shelters, most require a background check.
- **Dress with identification.** Visibly show that you are an Animal Disaster Responder, using a branded t-shirt, badge, or name tag.
- **Update your cell phone contacts.** At a minimum know who to contact for field support questions (including pet supply requests, scheduling of veterinary visits, reporting daily census counts and handling pets not suited to remain in the shelter) and how to contact the Shelter Manager, as well as a 24/7 emergency contact number if you need to reach someone outside of normal business hours.
- **Clock in.** There should be a sign-in and sign-out sheet for shift workers. Tracking hours is used for disaster fund reimbursement in most jurisdictions, so also check how your organization needs you to report your worked hours to them. Often, the daily ICS Form 214 (Unit Log) is used.
- **Check-in with the Shelter Manager when you arrive.** This is important; call them, if necessary. Record issues that need resolution.
    - Any immediate animal care needs?
    - Any changes or expected changes in the number of clients and animals using the shelter?
    - Are any clients in alternative shelters outside (cars, RVs, tents)?
    - Does the facility owner allow animals on-site?
- **Check-in with veterinarians and staff involved with animal care.** Record issues. Discuss plans for verifying vaccinations. You will be supervising, coordinating the staff, and ensuring hours are recorded.

- **Walk the dormitory and grounds to observe the situation.** Again, identify and record issues that need resolution, such as animals in feces/urine, distressed animals, and any signs of illness. Work with the pet owner to find solutions and aid them in caring for their own animal(s).
- **Oversee the registration and placement of pets in the shelter.** As clients arrive with animals, ensure basic triage is occurring and separation of suspect animals is occurring.
- **Ensure animal supplies are available on site.** A detailed list can be found in the Louisiana Cohabitation document in Section 2 and the Appendix.
- **Coordinate disposition of aggressive, ill, and uncared for pets.** For aggressive animals, at a minimum, mark the crate warning of the aggressive animal, move the client and animal away from other clients, and ensure access to the pet relief area does not bring the animal in contact with other clients and pets. Some animals may not be suited to remain in a cohabitated shelter, so work with your field support to coordinate alternative placement and transportation when appropriate.
- **Ensure clients follow the rules.** Work with the Shelter Manager to resolve issues with clients that are not complying. A friendly and helpful attitude goes a long way to defuse situations. Use Failure to Comply forms, as needed. Keep your field support informed of the issues.
- **Document injuries.** Immediately contact your field support to report animal injuries and human injuries.
- **Support and encourage clients directly.** Interact with clients, check-in on each pet, and fill out the Daily Animal Care Sheets.
- **Resolve needs for temporary animal care.** Clients may need to leave animals unattended at the shelter for multiple hours due to a job, checking on insurance, or unplanned visits to the emergency room. This may take coordination with your field support. Additionally, some may need feeding or walking support but otherwise can monitor their pet.
- **Post signage stating rules and 24-hour/night contact.** Some emergencies occur in the middle of the night.
- **Set a Daily Check-in time with animal field support.** Report all incidents and outstanding issues and discuss solutions.

Supplies to bring:
- Basic Signage and Forms – Pet Rules, Pet Relief Area, Nighttime Contact Number, Crate Warning Cards
- Basic Animal Supplies – cages (large), slip leads, bowls, crate liners, cat supplies, chew toys, soft and dry food, can opener
- Basic Animal-Safe Cleaning Supplies -- spray bottle, cleaner, disinfectant, rags, bags
- cell phone and charging cable
- Basic Personal Protection Kit (in your size) – non-latex gloves, N95 masks
- Basic Worker Items – snack bars, water, pocketknife, small flashlight, notebook, pen, change of clothes