

PROTECTING ANIMALS FROM DISASTERS



BY THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP ON ANIMALS IN DISASTERS (IWGAID)

THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP ON ANIMALS IN DISASTERS

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This paper is the product of the International Working Group on Animals in Disasters (IWGAID) a body of experts in disaster management, humanitarian relief and animal welfare from:
World Organization for Animal Health (OIE)
United Nations
Nuclear Energy Agency of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) and its member societies, working in consultation with a number of other concerned organizations including the **International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)**.

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ANIMAL RELIEF IS GOOD PUBLIC POLICY

About a billion of the world's poorest people¹ depend on animals for food, income, social status or cultural identification, as well as companionship and security. Disaster victims will also often protect their animals even to their own detriment. To them, losing animals from a natural or man made disaster is a catastrophe. In the developed world entire industries also depend on animals, making risk reduction an important tool to protect trade and food security. As seen in the Hurricane Katrina disaster, protecting companion animals is also a consideration for many cultures.

Policy makers in local and national governments, International Organizations and humanitarian aid agencies must be encouraged to ensure that humanitarian disaster management is pursued in such a way that it reduces risks to both humans and animals. With effective planning and partners, this can be done at the same time, reduce poverty and hunger, and be an important contribution to cultural preservation and disease reduction.

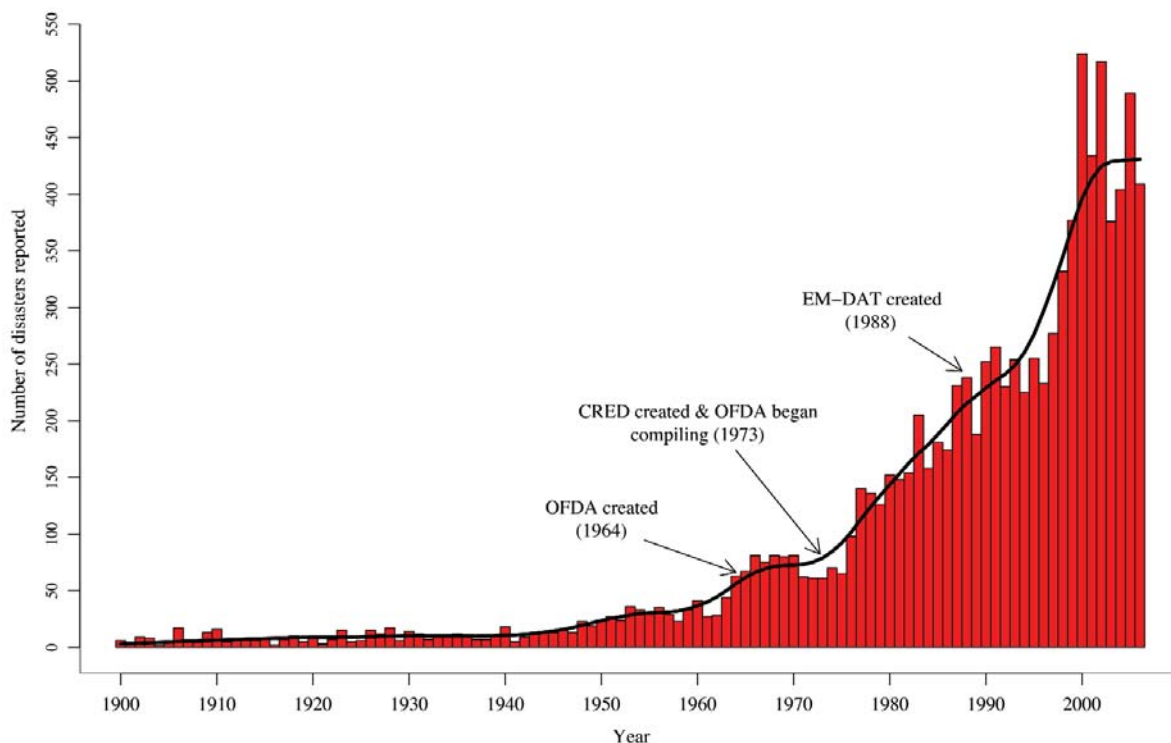
The focus of this paper is on the response and preparedness phases of acute disasters, including conflict, with general recommendations for integrating animal

and humanitarian relief for mutual advantage; however the participants recognized that “risk reduction” must also be part of the overall policy as well, especially as envisaged by the UN’s International Strategy on Disaster Reduction office (ISDR). To facilitate implementation of the paper’s proposals, a field handbook of basic guidance and instruction should be drafted that draws on existing work and new thinking to deal with livestock and work/companion animals in major disasters where the scope is hurricanes, tsunamis, floods, fires, industrial accidents or conflict. Other products should also focus on chronic crises like long-term droughts. Public or private agencies, local or national governments involved in disaster relief are invited to participate so that the products are practical and of value to anyone in an emergency.

IMPLEMENTING A WORKABLE POLICY

Best practices must be exercised and developed as a team effort between the various related professional communities. The IWGAID recommends joint exercises by the humanitarian and animal welfare/relief communities, taking into account local requirements and limitations so that the practices fit the economic, political and social pressures of the real world.

Natural disasters reported 1900–2006



EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database – www.em-dat.net – Université Catholique de Louvain, Brussels – Belgium

¹ 700 million or “Approximately one-quarter of the global poor, of whom 2.8 billion live on less than US\$2 per day, are livestock keepers.” Source: *Livestock - A Resource Neglected in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers*, FAO. http://www.fao.org/AG/againfo/projects/en/ppipi/docarc/pb_wp1.html

BASIC RULES

1. Veterinarians and animal protection experts should be included in disaster assessment teams and their advice used in community disaster planning.
2. Where possible, humanitarian relief bodies and local governments should involve animal care groups such as international animal welfare relief NGOs to provide shelter, rescue and veterinary care and generally augment the humanitarian community.
3. Humanitarian aid workers should be given basic stray animal awareness training for safety reasons.
4. Joint training between animal care and humanitarian relief workers will enhance the ability of both communities to work together and ensure an approach to disaster management that saves both people and animals at the least cost.
5. Policy makers should take into account practical indigenous techniques and economic, trade or social restrictions.



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CONSEQUENCES OF GETTING IT WRONG

- Food security may be threatened and poverty and vulnerability to disease increased by getting the animal component of disaster management wrong, consequences which in themselves can lead to conflict.
- Some people will not enter refugee camps unless provision is made for their companion animals or livestock – creating a security issue.
- Many people will share their vital rations with their animals if food is not provided for livestock, companion or work animals – reducing human nutritional levels.
- The loss of herds creates a strong psychological dilemma for victims of disasters, who not only lose possibly their main economic base, but also the focus of their family and culture.
- Livestock and work animals are expensive and difficult to replace at equal value.
- Disaster victims are sometimes denied their animals, for security reasons, impact on the host government or other reasons. Policy makers need to understand that this can be disastrous for the victims when they return to their homes after the crisis is over.
- Abandoned free-roaming animals, particularly large animals, may become liabilities (e.g. causing road traffic and other types of accident). In addition livestock and pets may contract disease, which may then spread to contact animals.
- Some diseases may be transmissible to humans via unprotected contacts, raw food consumption or bites and scratches (zoonoses).

INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS

Recommendation

To protect people, emergency planning must address threats posed to animals and their food by accidents at industrial facilities, by involving relevant stakeholders.

Background

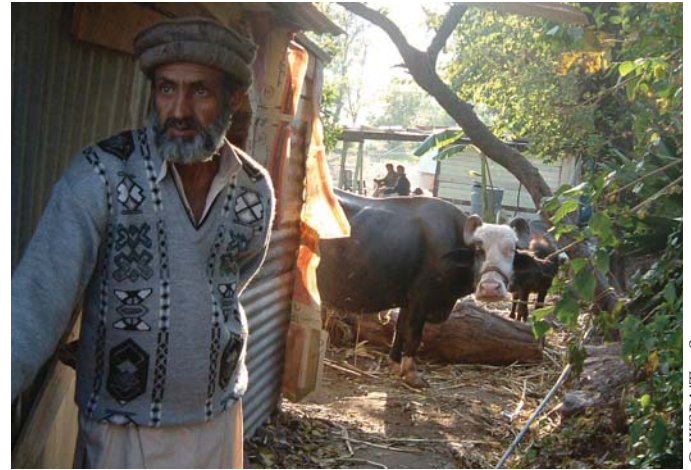
Industrial accidents can result in contamination, sometimes thousands of kilometers away, which can last for years. A contaminated animal means contaminated food. In some cases, this can directly deprive people of food, their livelihood, or both. For example, in Norway, following the nuclear accident at Chernobyl, reindeer husbanded by the Sami people experienced high levels of contamination. Rather than abandon the reindeer, dialogue between the public authorities and the Sami identified solutions that allowed them to continue their way of life, with the reindeer. Twenty years after the accident, restrictions are still in place but the Sami and their reindeer are still there.

Disasters are on the rise because people and animals increasingly live in hazard prone areas without effective preparedness techniques.



2 The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) was adopted at the 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction and is a global intergovernmental blueprint for disaster risk reduction efforts during the next decade. Its goal is to substantially reduce disaster losses by 2015 - in lives, and in the social, economic, and environmental assets of communities and countries.

EARLY WARNING AND PREPAREDNESS



Recommendation

Although as in Hurricane Katrina, inadequate response can be devastating, early warning is also crucial. Working in conjunction with the Hyogo framework² and the UN Platform on Early Warning, agencies, governments, academia and animal welfare NGOs should collaborate on the advancement of early warning and preparedness science and procedures particular to the owners of animal populations, especially local pastoralists and farmers. Early warning systems for animals should also be aligned with national/provincial systems for human communities. Contingency plans should be based on these warning systems and also aligned with humanitarian contingency plans. Disaster-prone areas must have available the ability to forecast natural calamities and the resources to react promptly and effectively when hazards strike.

Background

Early Warning systems can save significant numbers of livestock and property from impending disasters by:

- Creating awareness of risks a community is likely to encounter,
- Ensuring a constant state of preparedness,
- Guiding the community in implementing workable disaster prevention interventions such as building codes, road systems and placement of animals,
- Disseminating timely messages in a format that is understood by the local community.



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PROPER ANIMAL EVACUATION POLICY RULES

1. Even with proper early warning, adequate resources must be available to evacuate animals, otherwise they may die or be stolen — a major loss to a fragile economy and a foundation for future conflict.
2. Sanitation and safety considerations restrict animals from camps yet disaster victims know their animals are their future and may refuse to enter camps without animals being provided for.
3. Whenever practical, areas adjacent to camps should be provided, perhaps maintained by the victims with help from animal care professionals.
4. While disaster victims should have the right to keep their animals, the introduction of new animals in a host community can be very damaging to the local economy, so a balanced policy is needed.
5. Animal welfare professionals should co-design with the humanitarian community policies and procedures to reduce losses from evacuations.
6. Although often hard to do in conflict situations or the developing world, successful evacuation of live-stock requires:
 - Understanding the threat,
 - Marking/identification of ownership of animals,
 - Planning and clearing routes out of danger and to safety,
 - People to manage and implement the process,
 - Fodder and water on route and at point of refuge,
 - Prepared corrals with stockpiled/available fodder and water,
 - Security to protect the animals from theft.

DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Recommendation

Veterinarians, veterinary services³ and other animal health and welfare professionals can reduce these risks in many practical ways. These include the provision of advice on basic health and hygiene requirements for livestock management and movement. Organizing “train the trainer” programs is a useful means of transferring knowledge from trained professionals to other people working within communities. Even in the face of a disaster, it is important to try and maintain disease prevention and control programs already established and to provide a basis for these to be adjusted to deal with the disaster event. Where slaughter of infected and at risk animals is a necessary part of controlling a disease, it should be carried out as humanely as possible, and in compliance with OIE standards. Vaccination programs to control certain diseases, supervised by the Official Veterinary Service, can also have a significant effect in preventing the introduction and spread of these diseases.

Background

Large scale disease outbreaks are among the most serious of disasters, having the potential to kill millions of animals and people and to devastate the economies of local communities and entire countries. Epizootics can spread quickly across political boundaries and threaten the global livestock and poultry industries. Many of the emerging diseases that have recently crossed the human species barrier were of animal origin. Factors that contribute to the emergence and spread of animal diseases include:

- Malnutrition in animals, often a consequence of chronic disasters and poverty,
- Failure to control parasitic diseases,
- Other mistreatment or neglect of animals which reduces their natural resistance to disease (e.g. overcrowding or overstressing),
- Movement of animals, particularly when from mixed sources,

- Increasing numbers of animals kept under traditional husbandry systems without introduction of improved animal health promotion and disease prevention policy/techniques/education,
- Promotion of intensive farming without proper biosecurity (bioexclusion and biocontainment) practices in place,
- Increased contacts and exchange of microbial agents between wildlife and livestock on farms, during transportation and at market levels,
- Increasing numbers of pets, particularly dogs in certain countries, and of animal species used as pets.



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COMPANION ANIMALS ARE A SPECIAL CASE

In situations like Hurricane Katrina where there is a strong link between companion animals and the human population, preparedness is the key with animal care agencies supporting the humanitarian organizations with animal accommodations, preferably near the owners.

To control security and disease, rabies vaccination programs should be used as a minimum where this disease is endemic. The reason this is important is because of the much higher density of disease vectors.

Humane stray dog control measures can be implemented to manage populations in and near human camps.

³ According to the OIE definition. (World Organization for Animal Health (OIE): Terrestrial Animal Health Code, 15th Ed. OIE, Paris, 2006, 652pp)

FOOD SECURITY

Recommendation

The development community should ensure that livestock are recognized for the essential contribution they make to the livelihoods of the most vulnerable sectors of society, and their potential to improve nutrition and provide assets to lift people out of abject poverty. Reducing the vulnerability of livestock keepers and their animals to social and environmental shocks is a basic humanitarian goal.

Background

Livestock ownership is estimated to support and sustain the livelihoods of 700 million rural poor throughout the world. Livestock can provide a steady stream of food and revenue and help to raise overall farm productivity. For the poor and landless livestock is often the only livelihood option available. Animals allow them to exploit common property resources for private gain and often present the only means of asset accumulation and risk diversification that can prevent a slide into abject poverty. Livestock ownership also

increases the essential consumption of protein and creates employment opportunities beyond the immediate household. Livestock are vulnerable to slow onset disasters such as drought, as well as acute disasters such as conflict, earthquakes, floods, storm surge and high wind events. If the risks are not managed, loss of livestock in such events can easily upset the delicate balance and trigger a humanitarian disaster.



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CONFLICT: ANIMALS AS COLLATERAL DAMAGE

Livestock provide food and using food as a weapon of war is illegal under the Geneva conventions. Often military action can kill or maim livestock, thus damaging the local economy and food supply. The IWGAID urges governments to show restraint when conducting aerial or land operations in agricultural areas, in order to minimize this risk, and to comply with their obligations under the Geneva Conventions.

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POVERTY REDUCTION

Recommendation

Given the dependence of many people on livestock, introducing animal related disaster prevention and response measures should be a high priority of poverty reduction policy, keeping in mind the Hyogo framework and local resources.

Background

Livestock are generally not insured. If they are not protected from catastrophes, farmers and pastoralists can lose their entire income and go into a cycle of debt. In many developing countries, animals that bear cargo are also an important income source. In Africa and in the Middle East, cattle, equines and camels represent the wealth holding of individuals and communities. Protecting livestock is therefore more than just preserving income.

However, overstocked and overgrazed land can contribute to drought-type disasters, so education in proper land use should also be a part of an integrated poverty reduction plan.

In some regions with high population density and lack of crop lands, raising animals like poultry can be the difference between starvation and meeting minimal nutritional needs, between abject poverty and economic advancement.

For all these reasons, animal husbandry and handling are important. Poor husbandry or mishandling can create unhealthy, less productive animals, or even injuries and deaths.



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CHRONIC DISASTERS

Though they are not the focus of this paper, chronic disasters can contribute to issues such as disease, deforestation and over population. Public policy makers need to keep in mind that long term disasters like droughts and seasonal heat waves reduce the available water and the viability of land for raising livestock of any kind. Stress on water reserves in Africa and North America is currently at a high level and climatic changes over the next decade are apt to make matters worse. This is an important alarm bell for those planning land use, concerning both volume of animals on a given piece of land as well as the appropriateness of the presence of certain species in that land.

Animals in Disasters. Module A: Awareness and Preparedness. Independent Study Course, IS-10.

Federal Emergency Management Agency,
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Disaster management in India: the case of livestock and poultry.

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Disaster Planning Manual for Animals.

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Disaster Preparedness and Response Guide.

American Veterinary Medical Association,
Schaumburg, IL (USA).
<http://www.avma.org/products/disaster/responseguide>

Guidelines for the killing of animals for disease control purposes.

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World Organization for Animal Health, Paris, France.
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Managing livestock sector during floods and cyclones.

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LINKS

World Society for the Protection of Animals

www.wspa-usa.org

Information and resources can be found in the Disaster Relief, United Nations Affairs and Universal Declaration sections.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Paris, France

<http://www.unesco.org>

RELIEFWEB

www.reliefweb.int

The best disaster web site in the UN system. The UN General Assembly mandates that all UN agencies and NGOs post information on ReliefWeb.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Rome, Italy

<http://www.fao.org>

Primary international organization in the UN system dealing with animals.

World Organization for Animal Health (OIE)

Paris, France

<http://www.oie.int>

International reference organization (non UN) responsible for standard-setting in animal health (including zoonoses) and animal welfare.

International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), Geneva, Switzerland

<http://www.unisdr.org>

Primary UN organization mandated to coordinate the ISDR.

Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards.

<http://www.livestock-emergency.net/>

LEGS are being developed as a set of international guidelines and standards for the design, implementation and assessment of livestock interventions to assist people affected by humanitarian crises.

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Nuclear Energy Agency (OECD-NEA), Paris, France

<http://www.nea.fr>

<http://www.oecd.org>



PROTECTING ANIMALS...

PROTECTS PEOPLE

REDUCES POVERTY

PROTECTS FOOD SECURITY

REDUCES THE SPREAD OF DISEASE

PROTECTS CULTURAL VALUES

