

Big Bend Disaster Animal Response Team (DART) Report - Hurricane Katrina

A DART Liaison (Haven Cook) reported in to the American Red Cross EOC in response to Hurricane Katrina at 12:00PM on Saturday 8/27/05 and participated in the EOC briefing. After separate discussion with the Sheltering Officer (Faye Rioux) and the Administration team (Chris Floyd and Roberta Maddox), it was evident that the buildings being opened as Host Shelters (churches) did not have inside space to use as an Pet Friendly Shelter. An alternative plan was needed. However, by 5:00PM the American Red Cross identified there would be no need for shelters in the Tallahassee area due to Hurricane Katrina taking a western turn in the gulf out of our area, the DART Liaison Haven Cook went off duty after notifying members to stand-down.

By Sunday 8/28/05, at 12:00PM, Hurricane Katrina was forcing an evacuation of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida coastal areas, including Franklin and Wakulla Counties. The American Red Cross once again called the DART team back into the EOC. DART member Joanie Batten arrived in the EOC at 4:30PM and worked with Haven Cook on devising a plan for sheltering the animals of people arriving at American Red Cross Host Shelters with their pets. DART began developing contacts among vets, kennels and boarders in the Tallahassee area as well as Wakulla and Jefferson Counties.

The Animal Sheltering Plan that Joanie Batten and Haven Cook devised was put into place on Monday 8/29/05 at 8:00AM.

The Animal Sheltering plan for Hurricane Katrina had two components:

1. As people arrive at American Red Cross Host Shelters with their pets, members of the shelter management team would tell them where they can take their pets to be boarded free of charge during the event, as instructed by the DART Liaison. The following locations were established:
 - a) Bradfordville Animal Clinic - 6714 Thomasville Rd – Tallahassee - 893-3047: This clinic is approximately 2.5 miles north of the American Red Cross Shelter located at the Mormon Church in Tallahassee with available space for more than 20 pets.
 - b) North Florida Animal Clinic - 2701 N Monroe St – Tallahassee - 385-5141: This clinic is 1 mile from the American Red Cross Shelter located at the Senior Center in Tallahassee with more than 12 spaces available for pets.
 - c) Dubois Kennels - Crawfordville Hwy – Crawfordville - 219-1217: This kennel facility is on the highway on the way to the American Red Cross Shelter located at the Mormon Church in Crawfordville with several spaces available for pets.
 - d) Cay Curtis with Big Dog Rescue 997-6672 has 15 spaces in her kennel available for evacuees in the Monticello area should the American Red Cross open a Shelter there.
 - e) Oakwood Animal Clinic - 2528 W Tharpe St – Tallahassee - 386-1138: Had up to 15 kennels available if needed.
2. A DART liaison remained in the American Red Cross EOC during operational hours to respond to all calls dealing with animal issues and to interface with the Sheltering Officer to direct evacuees where they could board their animals free of charge while they are staying at an American Red Cross Shelter.

Joanie Batten functioned as DART liaison for Monday 8/29/05. During Hurricane Katrina 15 - 18 pets were boarded at the Bradfordville Animal Clinic by families staying at the American Red Cross Shelter located at the Mormon Church on Thomasville Rd in Tallahassee. The North Florida Animal Hospital did not have any shelter registered evacuees board their pets there, but they did board some pets of evacuees staying in the Tallahassee area hotels. DART member Jan Collier checked in with Joanie at the EOC to help staff the DART desk.

Joanie Batten remained on-call as the DART liaison throughout the week as American Red Cross Shelters began to consolidate into one location. Her cell phone number and the DART plan was listed on the DART board at the EOC. She also continued to check in with the Shelter Manager at the Mormon Church American Red Cross Shelter and with the Bradfordville Animal Clinic.

As of Thursday 9/1/05, there were 4 pets of shelter evacuees being boarded at the Bradfordville Animal Clinic.

For the weekend of 9/2/05 through 9/5/05 (Labor Day Weekend), the DART liaison work rotated between Walter Jants, Haven Cook and Lisa Lazarus as the on-call DART person. Haven Cook visited the American Red Cross Shelter located at the Mormon Church in Tallahassee each day to check in with the Shelter Manager about pet issues; no problems were identified. A couple checked into the shelter on Monday 9/5/05 with their pet dog but were reluctant to be separated from him (a retired champion show-dog). They elected to stay with him in the shade in the parking lot, but Haven Cook talked to them about the option of boarding with a local vet. Haven Cook remained the on-call DART person throughout the weeks of 9/5/05 through 9/9/05.

