THE INTEGRATION OF INFORMAL VOLUNTEERS INTO ANIMAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
Experiences from the 2015 South Australian Sampson Flat bushfire

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AIM AND GOAL

AIM - To identify and build best practice approaches to animal emergency management to enable engagement with animal owners, and other stakeholders in disasters and emergencies.

GOAL - The goal is to improve outcomes for public safety and the resilience of responders, animal owners, those with animal-related businesses, and communities.
10 YEARS SINCE HURRICANE KATRINA
ANIMAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (AEM)

Why does it matter?

When does it matter?
Three dead, four houses washed away in Dungog

A woman who was among three people killed in flash flooding this morning was trying to save her dog when she was washed away, a resident says.
ILLAWARRA FLOODS (AUGUST 2015)

Animal Rescues

- 24 Sheep
- 4 Cats
- 30 Alpacas
- 20 Horses
- 1 Dog
- 2 Chickens
- 396 Head of cattle
GENERAL ISSUES IN AEM

• Complexity
  - Responsibilities
  - Coordination
  - Communication

• Skills

• Resources
THE AEM LANDSCAPE

Animal Emergency Management

Primary Responders - ESOs & others

Secondary Responders - Extending Groups & other stakeholders

Emergent Groups & Spontaneous volunteers
## Specific Problems and Challenges

Are there problems or difficulties for your organisation, in regard to...
*(Emergency Services Organisations’ responses only)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The physical management/rescue of animals in natural disasters?</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Interactions with animal owners during disaster response?</td>
<td>2.82</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Interactions with animal owners in disaster preparedness and planning?</td>
<td>1.82</td>
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<td>d. Interactions with members of the general public with regard to animals in natural disasters?</td>
<td>2.14</td>
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<td>e. Post-disaster impacts in management of animals or their owners (e.g. distress, emotional responses)?</td>
<td>2.41</td>
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<td>f. The logistics available to respond to animals in natural disasters (e.g. additional personnel, equipment)?</td>
<td>2.45</td>
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<td>g. Unclear policy or operational responsibilities for the management of animals or their owners in natural disasters?</td>
<td>2.36</td>
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<tr>
<td>h. Inter-agency coordination around the management of animals or their owners in natural disasters?</td>
<td>2.27</td>
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<tr>
<td>i. Co-ordination with non-emergency service agencies (e.g. DPI, Local Council)?</td>
<td>1.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>j. Managing/dealing with untrained / spontaneous animal-related responders? (e.g. animal interest groups)</td>
<td>2.05</td>
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MISMATCH OF NEEDS AND RESOURCES

...leads to high profile response issues

(US - Heath and Linnabamy, 2015)

• Lack of clear command and direction
• Pet owners failing to evacuate because of their pets
• Pet owners evacuating without their pets
• Pet rescues of animals from premises after owners have left them behind
• Stray animals
• Unaccountable fundraising
• Mismanaged volunteers
INFORMAL VOLUNTEERS IN AEM
- WHY DO THEY DO IT?

• Interest and strength of feeling
• Desire to help
• Perceive a gap in emergency response
• Personal connection
• Attainable / accessible (?)
INFORMAL VOLUNTEERS IN AEM - HOW DO THEY DO IT?

• Social Media (digitally-enabled)
  +
  • Support convergence in emergencies and disasters
  • Local and rapid information sharing
  • Mobilisation of resources
-
  • Hard to control consequences
  • Demanding - hard to control workload - rumours/myth-busting, mavericks, trolls
ISSUES FOR INFORMAL VOLUNTEERING GROUPS IN AEM

• Lack of integration
  • Communication
  • Information
  • Awareness
  • Roles and responsibilities

• Lack of legitimacy
• Permanency
• Structures
• Personalities and leadership
SOCIAL MEDIA IN DISASTERS - SUCCESS STORIES

Mel Irons

Garrett Wells

Sam Johnson

bnhcrc.com.au
STUDY: THE INTEGRATION OF INFORMAL VOLUNTEERS INTO ANIMAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Rationale

• Importance of AEM
• Appetite for informal volunteering
• Stakeholder survey and workshop responses

Aim

• To explore issues around the integration of informal volunteers in animal emergency management

• Using Sampson Flat bushfire as a case study to explore questions regarding the challenges for, and strengths and limitations of, informal volunteering in this context.
WHY THE SAMPSON FLAT EVENT?

• Recent event
• Good data on official animal losses (PIRSA)
  • Not perfect
• Many organisations and groups active on social media
• High profile animal events
  • Public interest
  • Many news stories

Rachel Westcott – AFAC Presentation
Veterinary Emergency Management at the Sampson Flat bushfire
Thursday, 11.35. Stream 5
SAMPSON FLAT FIRE: SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY

- Department of Primary Industries and Regions SA
- RSPCA SA
- South Australian Veterinary Emergency Management
- SA Fires Animal Reunite
- Horse SA
- Livestock SA
- Primary Producers SA
- Lost Pets of Adelaide
- Lost and Found Horses and Ponies SA
- Fauna Rescue of SA
- Disaster Animal Response Team Australia
- National Animal Rescue Groups of Australia
- Lucky Little Paws Rescue and Adoptions
- Greyhound Racing
- Pets and Their People
- Help Save the Furry Ones
- Animal Welfare League SA
- SA Rabbit Rescue & Adoptions
- Amanda Vella’s SAHA Horse Rescue Sanctuary
- University of Adelaide Equine Centre
- SA Kennels, Catteries, Aviaries and Agistments
- Canine Emergency Rescue Squad
- Adelaide Hills Bushfire Lost Pets Register
- Statewide Community Assistance Database SA
- Sampson Fire Livestock & Animal Support
- SA Fires, People and Pet Temporary Rehoming
- Walking Forward Disaster Relief Team
SIGNIFICANT ANIMAL EVENTS IN SF FIRE - TEA TREE GULLY KENNELS AND CATTERY

Adelaide Hills bushfire: Dogs and cats perish as blaze sweeps through Tea Tree Gully Kennels and Cattery

A large number of dogs and cats have died in a fire that swept through a boarding kennel in Inglewood in the Adelaide Hills.

PHOTO: Owners of the Tea Tree Gully Boarding Kennels say they are devastated having lost their kennel and animals to bushfires.

(bbc News Tom Pedersen/Twitter)
STUDY: WHO ARE WE INTERESTED IN?

- Coordinators/administrators of emergent informal volunteer groups
- Members of established animal organisations (extending)
- Members of the volunteer group South Australian Veterinary Emergency Management (SAVEM),
- Trained emergency services personnel and personnel from key government agencies
STUDY: WHAT DO WE WANT TO KNOW?

- For Emergent Informal Volunteer Group Coordinators
  - Skills, knowledge and training
  - Approach to work, organisational philosophy, leadership
  - Perceived role
  - Social media role and usage
  - Engagement/relationship with established organisations
  - Experiences during Sampson Flat fire

- For other groups
  - General engagement with emergent volunteer groups
  - General role and experiences during Sampson Flat fire
  - Experiences with emergent volunteer groups and other informal volunteers
RESULTS (EARLY THEMES)

Communication - uncertainty about roles and direction

“...I think that’s really where we felt a little bit like we weren’t sure if we were doing the right thing or what we’ve been asked...we thought we’d know...

...we sort of felt, is there something else we should be doing? Or should we not be doing this? Or are we doing this correctly? That sort of thing...communication around what’s going on now, where’s it heading now, that sort of thing that I think we sort of thought we might be more in the loop about”.
RESULTS (EARLY THEMES)

Perceived gap/speed of Government response

“Because of the date of the fire which was the day after New Year’s day, and a Friday, Government took three or four days to mobilise in the full sense. Obviously CFS was there and that sort of thing....

...there was a lag time a definite three day lag time. So, in that three days is actually when a lot of the relocations look place, a lot of community initiatives, the setting up fodder ... all that sort of stuff happened in that three day window without government.

...Government needs to recognise that that will happen and facilitate it, or allow it or support that kind of community resilience, that community drive to help themselves”.
RESULTS (EARLY THEMES)

Need for coordination/collaboration

“I think it is important to have cooperation between groups. It can get a bit frustrating when someone posts on a group or page everyone go here or go there and you get forty people turning up to help one goat. And another place that needs assistance gets nothing.

…I think there needs to be a centralised sort of hub if you like, where needs are posted and whichever group can take on that particular task takes it on and sees it right through to the end”
WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH A LACK OF INTEGRATION OF INFORMAL VOLUNTEERS IN THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM?

• Potential for
  • Confusion
  • Inefficiency / inconsistency
  • Duplication of effort
  • Community frustration

• Public safety issues
• Squandering and devaluing of resources
• Issues of sustainability over the long term
WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES TO THE FORMAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM OF INTEGRATING INFORMAL VOLUNTEERS IN AEM?

• Additional expertise / skill
• Extended capacity
• Role creation – organisational advantages
• Improved outcomes for human well-being and animal welfare (One Welfare)
• Citizen participation
• Shared responsibility
• Enhanced community resilience
FINAL WORDS: POTENTIAL HELP/SOLUTIONS

• Available resources
• Adopting/adapting models of AEM in other countries (e.g. US)
  • Animal emergency responders (AER)
  • Credentialing
  • Volunteer manager
  • Community Animal Response Team (CART)

• Is AEM an opportunity for a new direction in emergency management?
QUESTIONS?

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