THE INTEGRATION OF INFORMAL VOLUNTEERS INTO ANIMAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Managing Animals in Disasters (MAiD): Improving preparedness, response, and resilience through individual and organisational collaboration

bushfire&natural HAZARDS CRC

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THE MAiD PROJECT

Issues: Consideration of animals can impact on people's decision making and behaviour during natural disasters causing potential issues for public and responder safety.

Goal: to improve outcomes for public safety and the resilience of responders, animal owners, those with animal-related businesses, and their communities.

Targeted research: The initial work of the MAiD project has identified specific priority areas requiring further investigation. One of these is the study of informal volunteers in animal emergency management (AEM).

Aim

* To investigate the integration of formal and informal organisations/groups in AEM

Method

Phase 1: in-depth interviews with people involved in the Sampson Flat fire response in 2015

Phase 2: online survey aimed at people who have volunteered with a group to help animals in a disaster/emergency since January 2015

Phase 1: Interview Participants

* 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

Interview Themes

* Participants valued their work due to improved animal welfare. They also recognised the link between **animal and human well-being**.

The main reason for [treating some animals rather than euthanizing], apart from the fact that it's good animal welfare, was the psychological well being of the community…also by treating those animals we learn more…about how to manage burns.
Volunteer veterinarian

Challenges and issues were also identified in AEM:

* **Communication** - Some groups involved in the official response felt uncertainty about their role, especially if they hadn't been involved in a previous event.
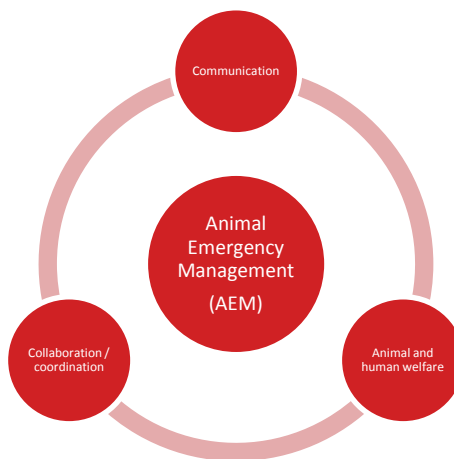
…we sort of felt, is there something else we should be doing? Or should we not be doing this? Or are we doing this correctly? That sort of thing…communication around what's going on now, where's it heading now, that sort of thing that I think we sort of thought we might be more in the loop about.
Animal welfare worker

* Need for **coordination/collaboration** - Participants identified a need for cooperation between animal groups and official response organisations to ensure skills and resources are used effectively.

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.
Animal rescue volunteer

Animal Emergency Management (AEM) — Communication, Collaboration / coordination, Animal and human welfare

Phase 2: The survey content was developed from the initial findings of the interview study. Through the survey we are hoping to learn more about people who help animals during disasters and emergencies, the skills they have and how they might be better utilised/integrated within current EM system(s). The survey is currently live and can be found here:
www.surveymonkey.com/r/animal_volunteers

END USER COMMENT - Sandra Barber, Manager Community Education, Tasmania Fire Service

One of the primary responsibilities of the Tasmania Fire Service is to support bushfire-prone communities to plan and prepare for bushfires. Small holders and animal-related businesses in these communities face additional challenges in preparing their properties, pets and livestock. This research project has already led to enhanced collaboration between government and community organisations working in this area.

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