

Animal Issues in Disasters, Unit 4

Establishing the Shelter

After planning for a location, identifying physical resources and supplies, and recruiting volunteers, the time will come when a shelter needs to be established.

A written plan for the setup means all energy can be funneled into operations and management at the time of a disaster.

Essential Tasks

Establishing a shelter:

1. Setup
2. Intake
3. Security
4. Animal care

The logo for BOAH (Breeders of Open Ancestry Horses) is located in the bottom right corner of the slide. It features a blue outline of the state of Indiana to the left of the letters "BOAH" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. A small yellow and red circular emblem is positioned between the "O" and "A".

This part will address the four essential task necessary for establishing a shelter:

1. Setup
2. Intake
3. Security
4. Animal care

Task 1: Setup

1. Transport materials, personnel to site
2. Identify personnel assignments
3. Plan operational flow
4. Post signage
5. Liaison with citizen shelter (as needed)



Task 1: Setup

Well thought-out and deliberate setup is important for many reasons:

- It allows everyone to do their job effectively;
- It keeps animals content, confined, and safe;
- Owners feel confident that their animals will be well cared for.

The EOC or ICP understands that this task is being done by the animal response team. Communication about the shelter will be shared with the public and media, so an open time needs to be determined and clearly announced (work with the incident PIO to accomplish this). Liaison with other parts of the ICS structure is important so that everyone understands activity in and around the shelter.

Remember: The animal shelter is just one part of a larger response.

- The PIO/Joint Information Center (JIC) can help educate and direct the public.
- The Incident Commander and Planning Section need to know the shelter's capacity and abilities.
- Logistics Section needs to be aware of resource needs and expenses incurred.
- The Liaison needs to be communicating and coordinating with other agencies (like city or county government or law enforcement) and responders to other ESFs (like 6, Mass Care).

Setup Tools

- Inventory checklists
 - Equipment & supplies
- Mobile caches
- Signage
 - White boards
 - Poster boards
- Barriers/barrier tape
- ID badges
- SOPs/guidelines/forms



Key tools to set up the shelter include:

Inventory checklists: All resources need to be tracked. Capital items need to be returned after a disaster. Damage and/or loss need to be accounted for, just as the quantity of supplies used. This is an important part of the financial, or business, side of operating the shelter. In a disaster, the Logistics Section seeks to track all expenses to report the total cost of response. Only with thorough and accurate documentation can reimbursement be done through state and/or federal. This expense tracking helps determine when/if a federal declaration threshold has been met.

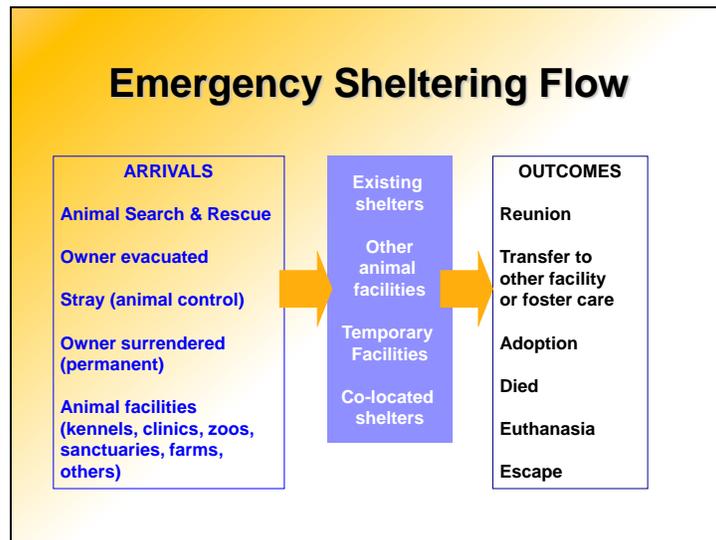
Mobile caches need to be dispatched and/or requested to fill gaps.

Signage: Permanent signs can be pre-printed as part of the planning process. White boards can help with charts, schedules and tracking functions that change frequently.

Barriers: Defined spaces for public traffic, worker access, and other designated areas can contribute to the safety and security of the shelter.

ID badges: Determine what identification is necessary within the shelter—for staff and visitors. Vests, shirts, scrubs, or nametags can help identify staff. Color-coded ID can help with security and designating leadership. Develop a plan and secure these supplies ahead of time to make the process of issuing easier. Determine who manages and distributes badges to rostered staff, volunteers.

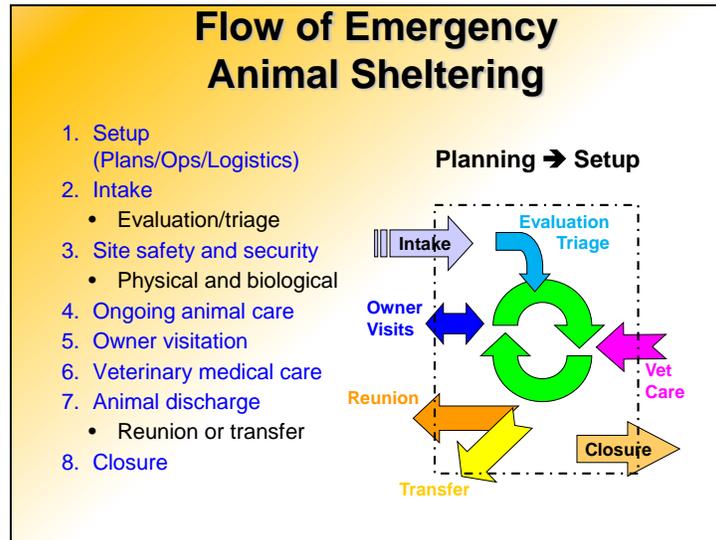
Standard Operating Procedures: Clear, concise, written policies should be provided to key staff members ahead of time, as well as on-hand for just-in-time volunteers.



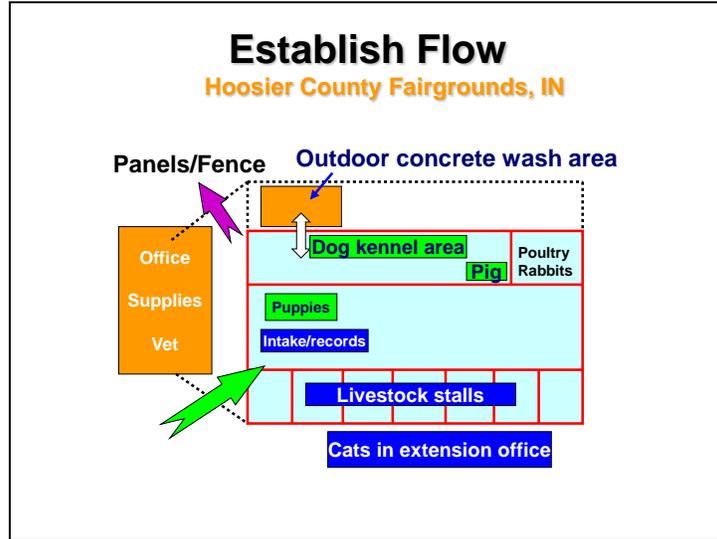
Once a shelter facility is chosen, proper set up is critical to success. This chart shows an overview of how, in general, animals will flow into, through, and out of the shelter.

Consider what needs to be done to achieve the final outcome in the context of the variety of animals that may arrive at the shelter or other locations. When a shelter, supply point, or any facility is opened, one key question is: How long do we plan to be here? And when are we going to close operations?

Outcomes vary. All outcomes listed on this chart are possible for the animals in the disaster. The ultimate goal is to connect animals to owners, but stray animals can be part of the mix. Despite the best planning, some animals will die or need to be euthanized because of injuries or illness. Unfortunately, escapes will likely happen even from the most carefully set up shelter; however, good planning can reduce those opportunities.



This chart shows the steps from opening to closing and a general flow for the shelter. The exercise at the end of this course will provide an opportunity to work in groups to plan a shelter within a facility. The goal is to incorporate all these functions into a defined space to help with traffic flow and minimize accidents and disease.



This diagram shows a possible setup using one large building to accommodate both large and small animals. Notice cats are indoors and separated as much as possible from the larger animals. No setup is perfect, and this model is not ideal, but for a small, all-purpose operation, this may work.

Slide 58



These pictures show examples of actual shelters. Note that panels and temporary fencing are used to create stalls and large cage areas for multiple dogs. Airline crates are stacked to allow for space restrictions, but still keep animals in a confined area. Flexibility is the key in all cases; ideal situations are rare. So be creative about possible setups and be willing to adjust.

Task 2: Intake

- **Origin**
 - Address vs proximity
 - GPS data from ASAR
- **Description**
 - Written description
 - Digital photo
 - Microchip scan
- **Identification**
 - Tyvek collars, Microchips, brands, tattoos, or eartags
- **Signed release/transfer, if owned**



Task 2: Intake

Once set up is achieved and the public is informed about the location of the shelter, the animals will begin to arrive. This is where we begin Task number 2: intake of animals.

Identification is critical to good final outcomes. Owner drop offs need to be connected with that owner by microchips, barcoded collar and bracelet, hand written name bands and collars. Also, releases need to be signed. Owners need to understand that the shelter will NOT be a permanent location and they need to give accurate contact information so they can be notified when the animal needs to be picked up. Displaced people should be working to identify temporary housing that can accommodate the whole family, including animals. This is why a Liaison Officer is important in communicating with Red Cross and other sheltering entities.

Written descriptions, pictures of animals with owners, plus scanning for microchips are all part of the identification and check-in process. We need to be able to connect owned animals to their owners in several ways.

Stray animals need to be housed separately and people seeking animals should be able to identify these animals. For some truly stray animals that remain unclaimed at the end, the local jurisdiction becomes responsible for their dispensation.

Release forms and intake software is available from BOAH to operate shelters and keep track of animals within the shelter environment. An intake form should be completed for every animal entering the shelter.

Intake

Health Examination

- Veterinarian or technician
- Triage (rapid evaluation)
 - Stable: Green
 - Deferred care: Yellow
 - Needs immediate care: Red
 - Dead or certain to die: Black
- Vaccination



Medical examination by veterinarians or veterinary technicians can help triage the animals into the proper place in the shelter based on care needs. Similar to human triage, a color-code system can be used to classify animals: Green, Yellow, Red, and Black.

- Green – healthy animals, few or no issues, house in general population
- Yellow – needs treatment, should be separated until treatment is provided, may or may not be able to stay in general population
- Red – needs immediate treatment, critical to survival; attention by veterinarian is important at this point in time. Generally these animals, if they survive their injuries need hospitalization or transfer to a veterinary medical facility
- Black – these animals are dead/dying or require extensive treatment that is not available at the shelter; transfer to a tertiary medical facility is not possible, not affordable or not reasonable. These animals may need to be euthanized even though they may not seem critical; their illness or injury cannot be dealt with in the shelter and we should spare them pain and suffering.

Vaccination history will be unknown or undocumented with many entering a shelter. The shelter management must set a policy about administering vaccines upon entry. Separation of vaccinated and unvaccinated populations is ideal.

Isolation/Separation

Diseased or ill

- Distance and biosecurity are key
 - Handle last OR have dedicated personnel
- Monitor exposed animals for illness
 - BIOSECURITY: wear PPE

Special needs

- Pregnant animals
- Mothers with young
- Puppies and kittens
- Injured animals
- Bite quarantines



Isolation/Separation

Although shelter facilities may not be large, two areas need to be offered for isolation: Diseased/ill and special needs. Limiting human and animal traffic in these areas is very important for many reasons including stopping disease spread and providing specific care.

Disease/ill areas are for animals with contagious and infectious disease such as canine parvovirus, feline upper respiratory infection, canine influenza, and “ringworm” which can spread to other animals. When staffing the shelter, try to designate some staff members to work in ill animal areas only. If this is not possible, then ill animals should be attended to last, after the other animals are fed, bathed, and cared for. The veterinary staff may be assigned to this area only.

Special-needs animals may require additional time and attention or need to be isolated to prevent unwanted behaviors. Pregnant animals, new mothers with litters, and elderly pets need quiet space and less activity to maintain an environment for optimal care. Puppies and kittens are much more susceptible to disease and need space away from ill animals nearby.

Injured animals are all ready traumatized and noisy kennels can delay healing or cause more injury. These animals may need to be moved to a veterinary clinic for proper attention.

Space should be allocated for bite quarantines, which inevitably will happen. All dogs, cats, and ferrets that bite a person need to be confined and observed for 10 days under Indiana law. If these dogs have aggression issues, they definitely need their own space and should be handled only by experienced animal handlers, such as animal control officers.

Behavior Issues

Need separated from general, ill population

- Aggressive: use only trained personnel
- Fearful: worker familiar with behavior
- Excitable/excessive barking
 - need towels over cage?

Behavior evaluator

- Need to gauge adoptability of dog
- Large shelters or national groups



Behavior Issues

Behavior issues are going to be a problem in any shelter environment. Most dogs are accustomed to living in their own homes, so expect barking, whining and anxiety. Normally friendly dogs may become fearful and aggressive as they are unaccustomed to other animals in close proximity. Covering cages with towels or separating with flattened cardboard boxes to reduce visibility may help ease tensions. Once out of the confusion and noise of the shelter environment, many animals may be perfectly fine.

Behavior evaluation may be useful prior to adoption of unowned animals that remain at the end of the shelter period. A behavior evaluator can help ensure they are placed in a new home comfortably. This type of evaluator is available from national groups, as well as larger shelters throughout the state.

Task 3: Security

Goals

1. Protect animals:
 - Escape
 - Injury
 - Theft
2. Protect people:
 - Injury
3. Control disease spread
 - People
 - Animals



Task 3: Security

Security has become a bigger issue than first anticipated. Animals will be taken by non-owners, escape in spite of our best efforts, or may become injured while in the shelter.

People may also be injured due to less-than-ideal situations and animals bites, which occur at all shelters opened for emergencies. Signs and rules need to be clear to all who enter, work in, or pass through the shelter. Limiting traffic helps not only minimize injury to people and animals, but also keeps any contagious diseases from spreading to other parts of the shelter.

Please be assured that some type of security will be necessary to keep some people out and the right people inside the shelter.

Security Practices

Limit access

- Limit access to authorized personnel
- Identify authorized personnel
- Escorts for visitors
- Limit entry and exit points



Security Practices

Security means limited access to authorized individuals to specific areas of the shelter. A planned system for identifying staff as well as visitors is essential. Badges, shirts, color codes – any system – can help maintain security and order.

Visitors within the shelter should be escorted. Access points should be limited and locked or monitored. A sign-in sheet for workers and guest will help with security.

Owner Visitation

Owner ID

- Wrist band, lanyard, other?
- Code of conduct
- Posted rules

Collocated shelters

- Help care for pets
- Establish schedule for cleaning/exercise
- *Don't allow handling of other animals*
- *Use caution if family includes children*



Owner Visitation

If visitation is permitted, clear rules and expectations for owners must be established and communicated in regards to caring for their pets. Many shelters have had to deal with situations that arise related to visitation. Remember, space is usually limited and everyone is a bit stressed so tempers can flare. It is important to make the rules clear to everyone and work to avoid conflict before it arises. Ensure small children do not handle the animals. Most shelters put an age limit on who can be in the shelter. A family visiting area may be useful if small children are included.

Collocated shelters present some extra challenges with the extra, regular owner traffic. Matching pet/owner ID and a signed code of conduct (rules) are essential.

Even though owners are present with their pets, cohabited shelters still need matching identification systems and animal intake forms.

Task 4: Animal Care

- **Daily evaluation**
 - Eating, drinking?
 - Vomiting/diarrhea?
 - Coughing/sneezing
 - Other health issues
- **Feed and water**
- **Sanitation**
- **Exercise**
- **Rest periods!**
- **Daily census**



Task 4: Animal Care

Daily care needs to be provided by skilled volunteers. Do not permit an inexperienced volunteer to handle caged animals. Each animal needs to be monitored every day for eating, drinking, health issues and elimination. Exercise is important, if that is possible in your shelter situation. Rest with lights out, no people and no activity helps to decrease stress for people and animals. Lights out at night plus down-time in the afternoon with no human interaction helps decrease noise and promotes rest for the animals.

It is critical to COUNT the animals every day. Daily census will need to be reported to the EOC and is important for reimbursement of associated operation expenses under the PETS ACT after the disaster is over. How many, where are they, where did they go, how many were lost, how many were discharged, how many were transferred, etc.

Feed and Water

Dishes

- Wash daily if possible
- Wash/disinfect between animals
- Paper (disposable)

Water

- Potable only (request)

Companion animal feed

- Appropriate for species
- High quality
- Prefer *new bags*



Feed and water are essential to life, in any shelter environment. Potable water may need to be ordered through the EOC if the disaster has contaminated the water supply or is unavailable in the facility. When identifying potential sheltering facilities, water supply is an important factor in selection. Disposable dishes are preferable to prevent disease spread and labor; if not available, someone will need to be in charge of cleaning dishes on a daily basis.

Finally, food needs to be good quality and donations are NOT a reliable source. Most of the large dog food companies are willing to provide a variety of food in large quantities so the animals can consume the same food each day.

Donations in one area get out of hand easily. A donations management person on the animal response team will be useful to sort through all the donations that WILL arrive at the shelter location and other places, too. Donations can occupy valuable space, and they need to be managed. If items are not useful within the shelter operation, they may be redirected to other outlets for distribution. Individuals may be able to use food items before they go to waste.

Bedding

- Towels, blankets
 - Warmer, more comfortable
- Newspaper, disposable pads preferred
- Disadvantage
 - Need laundered between animals
 - Shredding (chew on)



Disposable bedding is ideal and will minimize spread of disease and provide for easier clean up. However, towels and blankets will arrive and those can make guests more comfortable. One disadvantage to using towels and blankets is that they will need to be laundered, which adds to the work load.

They can also be chewed, which can lead to a foreign object in the body—not something staff wants to deal with at a temporary shelter.

Cat Litter/Litter Boxes

- Change litter daily
 - ↓ sporulation of parasites
- Always clean and disinfect between cats
- Don't use "scoopable" litter for little kittens (sticks)
- Limit multiple kittens/cats per cage (2 adult)/litter



Cat Litter/Litter Boxes

Housing cats means dealing with litter boxes. Disposable ones are ideal. Boxes need to be changed daily, because letting feces sit in litter pans can cause parasite problems. When reused, boxes must be cleaned and disinfected between uses to control disease. Again, this can add to the shelter work load.

Try to group cats by family, but do not exceed more than two adults per cage, even in large dog cages. Consider using clay litter for tiny kittens to avoid creating a mess with scoopable litter.

Exercise, Visitation, Rest

- **Periodic exercise**
 - Dogs; probably not cats
 - Horses
 - Halter-broken livestock
- **Owner or authorized staff only**
 - Supervised
 - Designated area
- **Need quiet time/rest period (night)**



Exercise

Dogs and cats need visitation, exercise, and rest. The shelter needs to designate time for each. Exercise applies to all species except cats and those livestock not halter broken.

Exercise needs to be supervised, as does owner visitation. Exercise areas need to be designated, as do owner visitation areas. Area needs to be cleared of fecal deposits as they happen. So plan to provide waste bags and/or containers.

Veterinary Medical Care

Onsite care

- First aid/minor care
- Preventive care

Substantial care

- Mobile clinic
- Transfer to stationary clinic
- Euthansia

DAILY SCREENING EXAM



Veterinary Care

Veterinarians, veterinary nurses, and assistants are important members of the response team. As mentioned earlier, they need to triage or evaluate every entry and attend to injuries or illnesses that need immediate attention. The veterinary staff should make decisions about vaccinations, isolation and separation, as well as the need to transport animals for care at other facilities.

Veterinarians will also be needed to determine when animals are terminal and cannot be saved. This is a reality of disaster situations and is difficult for some to accept. Sometimes animals are so ill treatment is not timely or practical to sustain life.

While volunteers or trained personnel can provide daily care, it would be ideal to have a veterinarian do daily screening of animals in the shelter to identify any new illnesses or problems with the animals and to monitor those animals receiving medical treatment. The constant presence of a veterinarian may not be necessary, but daily veterinary visits provide the best option for medical care.

Livestock Feeding

- Grass hay strongly preferable
- Alfalfa
 - Increased incidence of colic, bloat, enterotoxemia
- Special diets
 - Pellets for older horses
- Poultry
 - Poultry feeds



If sheltering livestock, make sure to have a local expert on feeding livestock species housed. Water is important for all livestock but diets for horses are different than cattle, which are different than sheep, which are different than chickens. The county Extension educator should be able to connect shelter staff with a producer group or nutrition expert who can help determine livestock feeding solutions.

Allocating appropriate feedstuffs will be necessary. Unless agreements were made in the planning phase, the Shelter Manager should request appropriate feed through the logistics section, as with other supplies.