



Operations Manual

Vermont Disaster Animal
Response Team

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Purpose of Standard Operating Procedures

The Vermont Disaster Animal Response Team (VDART) responds prior to, during and after an emergent event or disaster involving animals. Depending upon the duration, scope, and type of disaster, emergency animal sheltering may be required. VDART helps provide care for companion animals during a disaster through coordination of equipment and resources, deployment of trained teams to set up and staff temporary emergency pet shelters, and by providing assistance and support throughout the state in order to provide an effective, efficient response to the disaster.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to VDART members prior to and during an emergent event or disaster within Vermont requiring animal evacuation, sheltering, triage, and/or reunification. The document contains operational guidelines, Incident Command Structure job descriptions, emergency sheltering forms and helpful checklists that can be used when sheltering pets during an event.

Scope of Standard Operating Procedures, and VDART

This manual is intended for use in the state of Vermont by trained animal response teams and by emergency management personnel. VDART realizes that the local needs for sheltering pets may be different from town to town and encourages the tailoring of the response and forms contained herein to meet those needs. However, forms may not be altered without prior express written consent of VDART. VDART is committed to building capacity in the state of Vermont to respond to disasters involving pets and can provide personnel and equipment to help manage temporary emergency animal shelters during response and recovery periods as well provide accurate record keeping, and identification of animals for reunification with their owners. However, VDART is a volunteer organization with resource, equipment and trained personnel limitations and will respond to the extent that it is able within those resource limitations. The following should be taken into consideration in the event of a disaster.

1. Pet owners are responsible for their own animals, and they should always be prepared to continue care, even in emergencies, such as a hurricane evacuation.
2. Commercial operations such as farms, boarding kennels, and municipal and private animal shelters can be expected to provide for their animals depending upon incident severity.

3. VDART provides training and exercises, public education, supplies, personnel, and where applicable, support to local emergency management authorities and municipal authorities within resource limitations.
4. VDART can provide support to municipalities for inclusion of pets in town Emergency Operations Plans.
5. Procedures under this guide will be implemented for all animals that are owned, lost or stray, including service dogs, affected by a large-scale emergency. This may include animals that are temporarily incapable of being cared for by their owners, or pose a potential danger to themselves or the public.

Chapter 2

Pets in Disasters

Authority for Disaster Work

The federal and state authority to incorporate pets into disaster planning and response comes from federal requirements if reimbursement for disaster related expenses is sought, and from State Support Function 11 Annex K.

Federal Authority

History

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina (August 2005), it became overwhelmingly apparent that provisions needed to be made for companion animals in major disaster and emergency situations:

- Many Katrina evacuees and disaster victims were forced to leave their pets behind when they evacuated their homes because no provisions had been made to evacuate pets along with their families.
- The emotional trauma of those forced to leave their pets behind and the suffering of tens of thousands of animals was compounded by the health and safety risks that resulted from so many abandoned animals in one area.
- Conversely, many pet owners, knowing their animals could not accompany them, chose to stay in their homes with their pets, further complicating human rescue efforts and adding to the human death toll.

The PETS Act, which garnered tremendous bipartisan support in both houses, passed quickly in Congress in 2006 and was signed into law October 2006. The PETS Act amends the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Public Law (PL) 100-707 signed into law November 1988. The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act amended the Disaster Relief Act of 1974, PL 93-288. These Acts constitute the statutory authority for most federal disaster response activities pertaining to FEMA and FEMA related programs.

The PETS Act: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-109publ308/pdf/PLAW-109publ308.pdf>

- Requires state and local emergency preparedness operational plans address the needs of individuals with household pets and service animals before, during and after a disaster,
- Grants the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) the authority to approve the standards of these plans and assist state and local communities in developing plans.
- Indicates that the FEMA Director may make financial contributions on the basis of programs and projects approved by the Director, to the state and local authorities for animal emergency preparedness purposes. This includes the procurement, leasing, construction or renovation of emergency shelter facilities and materials that will accommodate people with pets and service animals.
- Allows FEMA the authority to provide essential assistance to individuals with pets and service animals — for the provision of care, rescue, sheltering and essential needs to such pets and animals.

State Authority

Animal Disaster Emergency Plan (State Support Function 11, Annex K)

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFMM) serves as the co-lead for State Support Function (SSF) 22 within the State Emergency Operations Plan (SEOP). The SEOP designates the Vermont State Veterinarian as Team Leader for SSF 11 during a statewide response to an emergency that impacts Vermont's animals (See Appendix J– State and Local Emergency Operations Plans That Include Pets) for complete Animal Disaster Emergency Plan for the state of Vermont.

Chapter 3

Vermont Disaster Animal Response Team (VDART)

Organization and Management

Mission

To provide a coordinated effort in preparing for, preventing, responding to, and recovering from any emergencies affecting animals. VDART will work to increase the capability of community coordinated response to animal emergencies on the local, regional, and federal level in order to best serve the welfare of animals.

Governance

For a current list of members of the VDART Board of Directors, visit www.VermontDART.org and navigate to the “Mission and Governance” section.

Operating Guidelines

Regional Operating Teams

VDART Regional Operating teams consist of trained individuals who provide information, training, support, supplies and personnel to help jurisdictions plan and respond to animal issues in man-made or natural disasters. VDART teams typically serve the local and regional jurisdictions where volunteers live and work, but may also be called upon to aid jurisdictions outside of their region and state. Many volunteers in VDART are cross-trained with other animal and human organizations such as Citizen Emergency Response Teams (CERT), the American Red Cross (ARC), local animal shelters, and many are also trained and affiliated with national animal response organizations. Animals affected by disaster may include small and large animals such as pets, livestock, and exotics. In order to comply with the federal PETS Act of 2006, when operating temporary emergency pet shelters, VDART Regional Operating Teams are required to accept “Household Pets” (as defined by the PETS Act.) The definition of “Household Pets” includes dogs, cats, birds, rodents, turtles, pets that are traditionally kept in the home for pleasure rather than for commercial purposes. Pets not included in the definition of “Household Pets” (and therefore VDART teams are not required to accept them in order to comply with the federal PETS Act) include: reptiles (with the exception of turtles), amphibians, fish, insects/arachnids, farm animals (including horses and animals kept for racing purposes). VDART teams may however choose to accept animals not included in the definition of “Household Pets” if the Team Leader chooses to do so and it poses no threat of safety to volunteers, or other shelter residents and the team is equipped and trained to handle such pets.

Qualifications to Become a Member of an Operating Team

To participate in VDART as a team member, the following requirements an individual must:

- a. Be at least 18 years of age
- b. Submit a complete application and volunteer waiver (Appendix C)
- c. Complete Level 1 required training (Level 2 and 3 are recommended, but not required)
- d. Pass a background check when required
- e. Current tetanus vaccination is recommended, but not required
- f. Pre-exposure rabies vaccination is not generally required, but it is recommended, especially if interacting with aggressive animals or quarantined animals (if a team member does not have pre-exposure rabies vaccination, animal handling may be restricted during a deployment when an aggressive animal, or animal with unknown vaccination status is present)
- g. Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B are not generally required, but recommended
- G. Sign a pledge to follow the VDART Code of Conduct (Appendix C)

Functions of a VDART Regional Operating Team Member

All members of a team participate as a volunteer. One or more of the following tasks may be performed by a member of any team: set-up and break-down of temporary emergency pet shelter once team has been deployed, providing in-shelter animal care/cleaning services (specific duties may include, but are not limited to: cleaning cages and bowls, preparing food, maintaining a clean shelter environment, setting up and taking down animal housing, walking and socializing animals), registration duties including interviewing evacuees and filling out paperwork, taking photos of owners and pets and taking donations. Outside of deployments, VDART Regional Operating Team members may attend regular team meetings, participate in deployment drills/shelter set-up exercises, host team/VDART events and/or work with their community to become better prepared for disasters.

Qualifications to Become a VDART Regional Operating Team

In order to become a VDART team, the following requirements must be met:

- 1) Acquire chartered status
- 2) Form a Board of Directors

Teams are encouraged to seek the assistance and guidance of VDART throughout this process. If a team does not wish to be covered under VDART's non-profit status, there is no requirement to achieve chartered status or form a Board of Directors. Teams associated with LEPC's are included in this category.

VDART Activation Protocol and Liability Protection for VDART Teams

Background

During 2013, discussions were held between VDART, VAAF and the Vermont Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) regarding activation protocols necessary to ensure liability coverage for responders. The information contained in this section

was developed as a result of those conversations and its purpose is to clarify the activation protocols that must be followed in order to ensure that participating responders are covered under the liability insurance that is referenced above. **Note:** Volunteers may not be protected under 20 V.S.A. § 20 if the activation procedures in this memorandum are not followed.

Activation Protocol

The following procedures are applicable to regional DART teams chartered or affiliated with VDART, which hold the authorizing Memorandum of Understanding with VAAF. These SOPs are intended to be subordinate to the authorizing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

State Level Activation Protocol During an Emergency/Disaster:

If the state Emergency Operations Center is activated/operational and the need arises for assistance from VDART:

The Incident Commander (IC) or the local Emergency Management Director (EMD) should contact the Vermont Department of Public Safety, Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEHMS) (800-347-0488). The IC or EMD provides requested information during the call. The request is then routed appropriately and approved.

If the State Emergency Operations Center is not activated or operational, and the need arises for assistance from VDART:

The IC or EMD contacts the Vermont Agency for Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAF) directly for approval (802-828-2421) during business hours. If the request is made outside of normal business hours (7:45am-4:30pm M-F) the call should be placed directly to the DEHMS duty officer (800-347-0488). The call is routed appropriately and the request is approved.

Team Activation Protocol for an Emergency/Disaster:

Following completion of the above outlined steps, the State Veterinarian will contact Regional Operating Teams directly to activate and deploy. The Regional Operating Team will then contact a member of the VDART Board of Directors, preferably the Chair person, to inform them of the activation. All reasonable efforts must be made to contact the VDART Board of Directors. However, following contact with the State Veterinarian, the VDART Team can deploy prior to direct contact with the VDART Board of Directors if the situation necessitates.

Non-emergency Activation Steps (promotional and training activities)

Trainings, meetings, fundraising activities are included in liability coverage from the state. As such, non-emergency protocols must be adhered to receive coverage. These types of team activities do not require a formal activation; however, a representative of the DART leading the training or promotional activity must notify officials of the event during state business hours no later than 48 hours prior to the start of the event. The DART representative should notify the State Veterinarian in writing about the event and include the following information:

1. Date and time of event

2. Location of event
3. Nature of event (name of training; purpose of promotional activity)

The State Veterinarian will acknowledge the event via return email to the DART representative, and notifies the DEHMS duty officer in writing about the event.

Statutory language that is pertinent to liability coverage for entities responding on behalf of the State is the following:

VDART and its subsidiary Chartered or Affiliated Regional Response DARTs must follow prescribed procedures to invoke the available liability protection of the State of Vermont when activated by the State, or during an approved activity.

It has long been the practice for the State of Vermont, administered through the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS), to create a shield from liability when certain approved volunteer response organizations are activated for a disaster. A clear example this status are the various Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) upon which the procedures listed below are modeled. There are also included recognized circumstances when Liability protection is required for non-disaster / emergency activation events such as, but not limited to: Training, Meetings, Equipment Maintenance, Fundraising, etc.

The legal authority for this shield is most probably that which is known as sovereign immunity, derived from the British Common Law concept that the King (State) can do no wrong. In Vermont, the basics of this principle follows:

Immunities and defenses

- (a) Except in the case of willful misconduct or gross negligence, the state, any of its agencies, state employees, political subdivisions, local emergency planning committees, or individual, partnership, association, or corporation involved in emergency management activities shall not be liable for the death of or any injury to persons or loss or damage to property resulting from an emergency management service or response activity, including the development of local emergency plans and the response to those plans.
- (b) Any individual, partnership, association, corporation or facility that provides personnel, training or equipment through an agreement with the local emergency planning committee, the state emergency response commission or local emergency response officials is immune from civil for any act performed within the scope of the agreement

Obligation of state to defend employees

- (a) In any civil action against a state employee for alleged damage, injury, loss or deprivation of rights arising from an act or omission to act in the performance of the employee's official duties it shall be the obligation of the state to defend the action on behalf of the employee and to provide legal representation for that purpose at state expense, except to the extent that such representation is provided by an insurance carrier, or except in an action resulting from the service of civil process.

(b) "State employee" includes any elective or appointive officer or employee within the legislative, executive or judicial branches of state government or any former such employee or officer. The term includes, without limitation: *any person who volunteers for a state agency by providing services at the request of that agency and under the direction and control of that agency, but who does not receive hourly or salary compensation.*

Alert Levels – Statewide Response

Incident Severity and Response Levels

There are four operational levels within the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) that designate the level of response required to address incident severity. Emergency response is proportionate to the size and complexity of the hazards that an incident brings.

Figure 1. Alert Levels

Operational Level	State Emergency Operations Center
<p>Level 1 Monitoring or Normal Operations</p>	<p>Daily situational awareness to assure responsiveness in anticipation or occurrence of an emergency incident or large scale event that may require staff support. Includes 24/7 warning point.</p>
<p>Level 2 Low Intensity or Unusual Event Triggered by the potential for an event that could threaten the health and safety of the public</p>	<p>Operations and Planning Sections and the Communications Branch monitor the event, collect information and keeps appropriate staff and partners briefed. Selected personnel and Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) may be present in the SEOC on a 24/hr. shift</p>
<p>Level 3 High Intensity Event/Alert or Site Area Emergency Triggered by pending conditions or an event that will: 1) threaten the health and safety of the public; or 2) require a tightly coordinated response effort</p>	<p>SEOC is fully activated on a 24/hr. basis and selected ESFs and Support Annex agencies are requested, as the incident warrants. There is anticipation that the incident will require multi-day activation</p>

Operational Level	State Emergency Operations Center
<p>Level 4 Complex, High-Intensity Event/General Emergency Triggered by an extremely hazardous condition that: 1) poses an imminent danger to the health and safety of the public; or 2) requires a tightly coordinated response effort</p>	<p>All the attributes of Level 3, but is more complex. It is more likely to result in a Presidential Declaration. The SEOC may be activated into some of the recovery phase of the event. All ESFs and Support Annex agencies are activated</p>

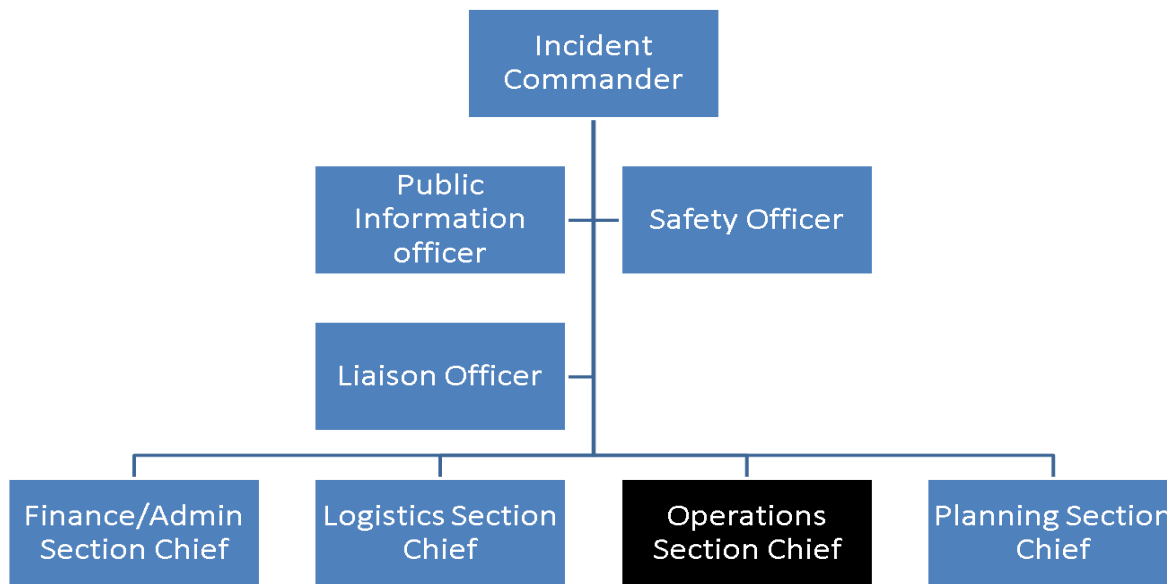
Incident Command System

VDART utilizes the principles of the Incident Command System (ICS) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS) as these principles enable team members to work together more effectively to manage domestic incidents no matter what the cause, size or complexity.

The use of ICS provides a standardized organizational structure used to command, control, and coordinate the use of resources and personnel that have responded to the scene of an emergency. It provides a framework for use of common language across jurisdictions and is multi-agency in nature. ICS focuses on five functional areas for management of all major incidents.

- **Command** – sets the objectives and priorities
- **Operations** – develops and conducts all operations
- **Planning** – develops action plans based on collected information
- **Logistics** – provides support, services, and resources to the operations
- **Finance/Administration** – monitors and analyzes costs

Figure 2.0 Typical ICS Structure



**Only Public Information Officers (PIOs) are authorized to speak with the press.
Direct all general inquiries to the PIO or your supervisor.**

Figure 2.1 Animal Response Organization Under ICS

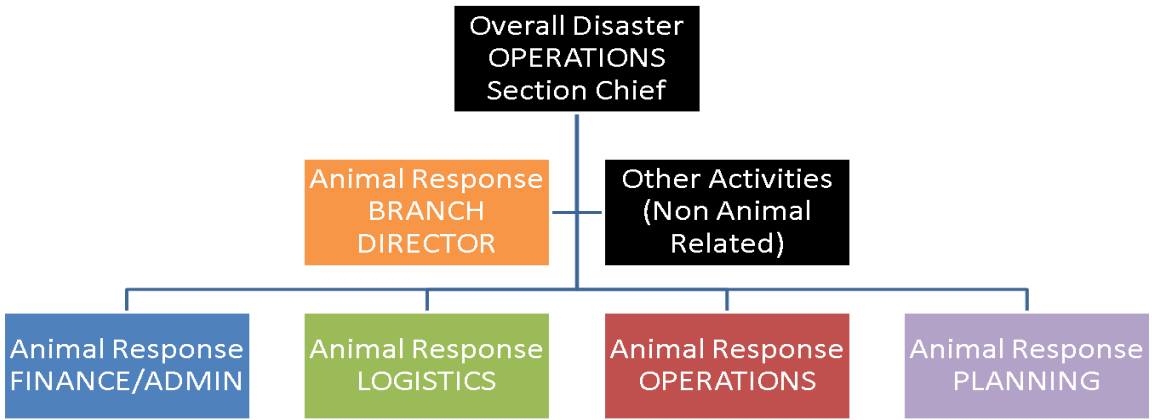


Figure 2.2 Detailed Look at Animal Response ICS Structure

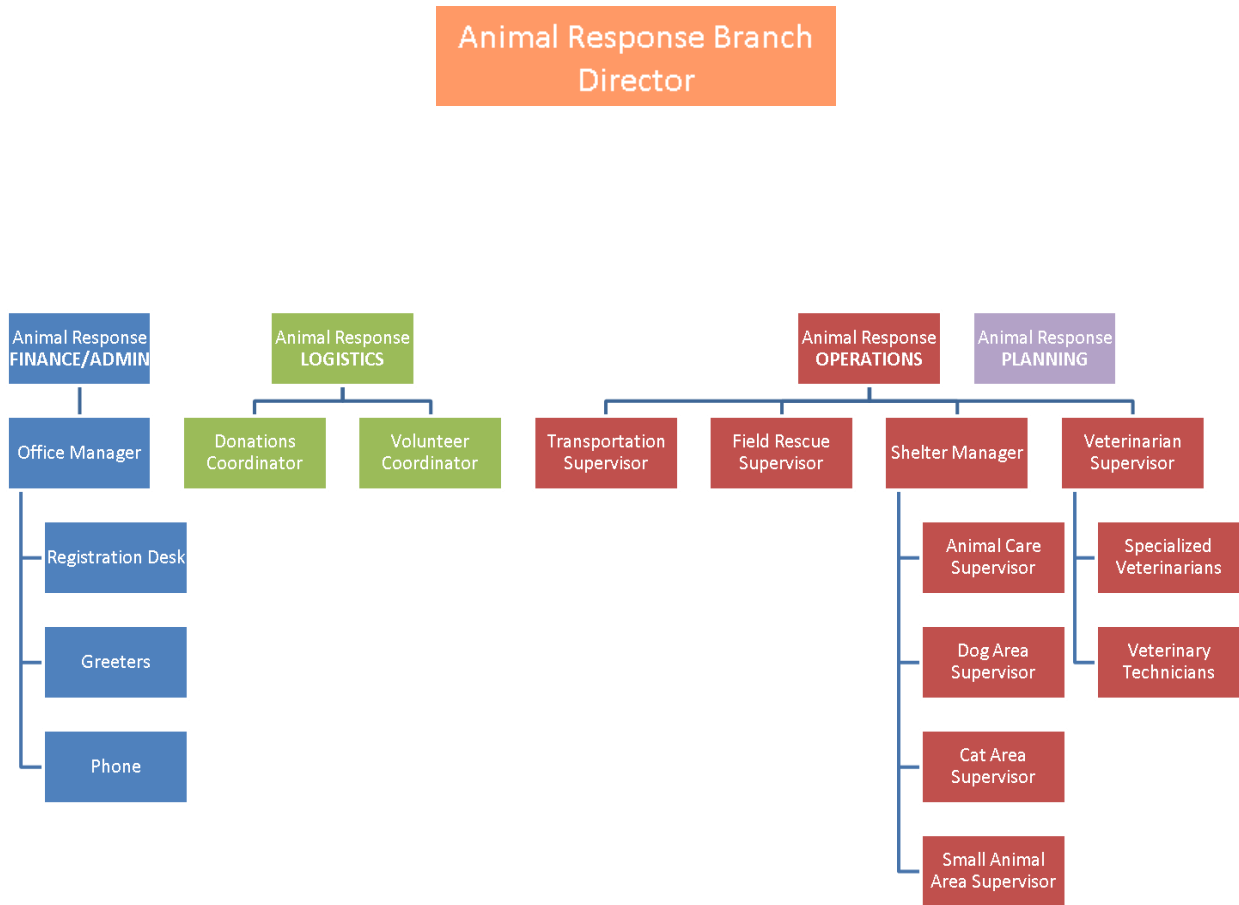
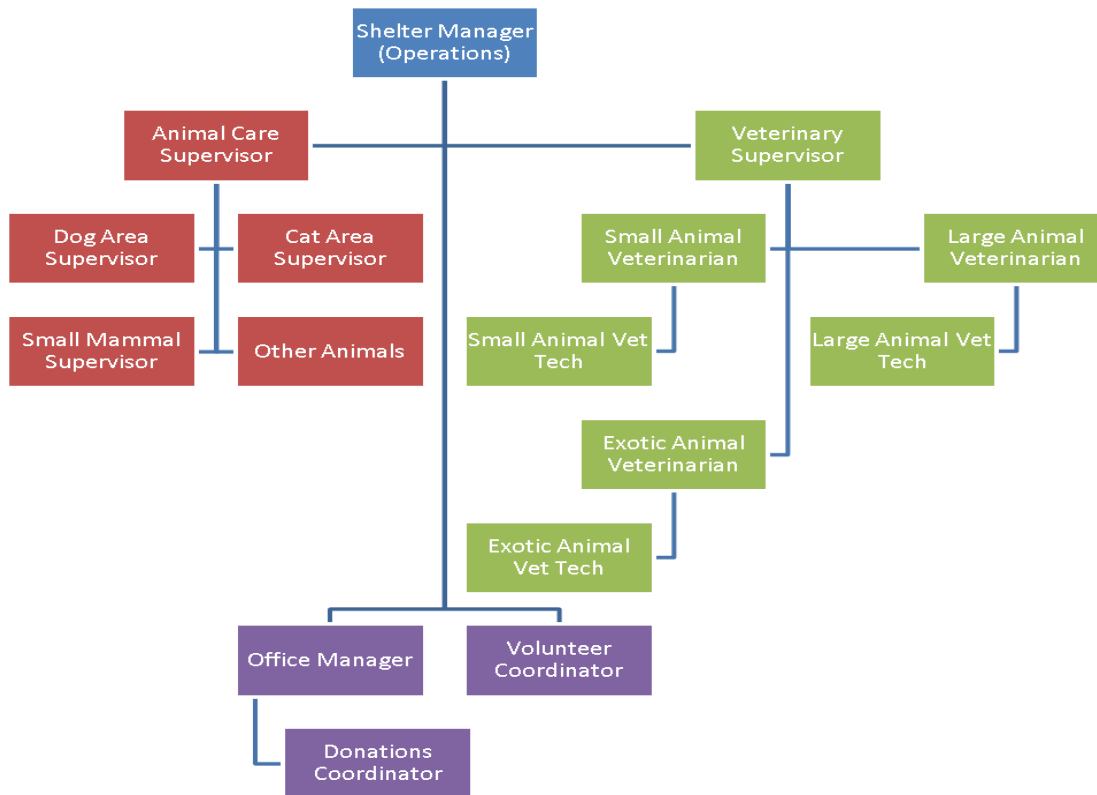


Figure 2.3 Smaller Events (Shelter Operations)



Forming a VDART Team

The following outlines one of a number of ways to form a team. If you already have potential team members, you may skip the steps listed below in “Recruitment/Getting Started.” *A VDART Regional Operating Team must be chartered and have a Board of Directors.* Guidance from the VDART Board of Directors is available for help in navigating this process. Seek assistance from VDART throughout your team building process. This is critical to the success of any team.

Recruitment/Getting Started

- 1) Host a meeting (your local Police Department, hospital conference room, Fire Department, or other cost-free venues are good options). Advertise the event in free newspapers and post flyers in your community. Invite all interested in disaster animal response. Include a slide presentation about VDART at the meeting, ask your local Emergency Management Director to address the group about the importance of incorporating pets into disaster planning and what the town has done to date. Invite Veterinarians, Emergency Management Directors (ED’s), Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), Citizen Corps Etc. Invite attendees to fill out a VDART volunteer application (see Appendix C)
- 2) Designate a team leader/Champion. The team leader should be someone with the time, energy and commitment to build a solid team. The Team Leader should have strong leadership skills, be able to stay calm and exercise good judgment under pressure, as well as have a strong commitment to the Incident Command System (See Team Leader job description in Appendix D)
- 3) Sources for finding team members or obtaining helpful resources – local veterinarians, Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), Citizen Corps, Animal Shelters, Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD), Local animal shelters or rescue groups, Cooperative Extension Service, Pet/Feed Stores, Boarding Stables/Horse Arenas, Animal Control Officers (ACO)
- 4) Include Veterinarians, Veterinarian Techs, ACOs, and Animal Shelter Personnel/Management as part of the team
- 5) Develop an MOU between your Regional Operating Team and your local shelter (see example in Appendix B)

VDART’s Pledge to Supporting Regional Operating Teams

VDART is not a response organization, but rather builds capacity in the state to respond to disasters involving animals. One of the means by which VDART accomplishes this is by building and supporting chartered teams. VDART members can expect a certain level of support from the organization in order to perform their best.

VDART pledges their support of volunteers by:

1. Treating all volunteers with respect
2. Keeping lines of communication open with volunteers at all times
3. Providing support when forming a team and assembling a Board of Directors
4. Seeking and considering volunteer input in organizational operations, decisions, and field work

5. Keeping volunteers safe while deployed to the best of the organizations ability
6. Being accessible to teams
7. Keeping teams apprised of organizational happenings at the state level
8. Providing equipment for emergency pet sheltering when possible
9. Not expecting a volunteer to perform any duties outside their level of comfort or expertise (training)

Preparing Your Team

- 1) Guide potential team members in completing the Level 1 required training (See Training below). A basic course in animal sheltering offered by a number of organizations (VDART, NHDART, RedRover, HSUS) can fulfill the Emergency Pet Sheltering Course – Basic requirement in level 1. Please inquire if a course you have in mind qualifies. The remainder of the coursework is completed online at www.fema.gov/training. Stay in contact with interested members, guiding and encouraging them through the entire training process. It is helpful to obtain animal handling skills by volunteering with your local animal shelter, humane society or rescue organization
- 2) Conduct disaster drills at your local human/American Red Cross shelter to prepare your team for activation. Set up the pet shelter as many times as possible before deployment
- 3) Acquire as many shelter set-up items (such as cages/crates, leashes, muzzles, bedding, reptile heat lamps, etc. as possible (Helpful Checklists - Appendix E)
- 4) Establish a written memorandum of understanding with local veterinarians/businesses to provide food, pharmaceuticals or overflow space during an event
- 5) Act as clearinghouse for information on other trainings to expand team skills such as Pet First Aid, Large Animal Handling, Rapid Water/Line Search Rescue, Small Animal Handling, etc.

Training

In order to protect people and their animals from harm (and VDART Volunteers and communities from liability), only trained personnel should be tasked with animal response within the scope of their expertise and available equipment. Copies of all completed training course certificates must be provided to VDART and the regional team leader. Members of VDART are expected to participate in formal and informal animal disaster drills, shelter management simulation exercises, cross-training opportunities with other state and local teams, communications and other equipment training, animal handling, hands-on training, and attend regular meetings whenever possible.

- a. **Required Courses:** All VDART members are *required* to complete the three Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Independent Study (IS) courses listed

below.). Each course is self-paced, followed by an on-line exam. Click the hyperlinks below for access the on-line courses.

Each course is self-paced, followed by an on-line exam. Click the hyperlinks below for access the on-line courses.

1. FEMA IS – 100.b [Introduction to Incident Command System, ICS-100](#)
2. FEMA IS – 700.a [National Incident Management System \(NIMS\) An Intro](#)
3. FEMA IS – 200.b [ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents](#)

b. **Recommended Courses**

1. FEMA IS – 10.a [Animals in Disasters: Awareness and Preparedness](#)
2. FEMA IS – 11.a [Animals in Disasters: Community Planning](#)
3. FEMA IS – 111.a [Livestock in Disasters](#)

c. **Additional Courses to Consider:**

1. Psychological First Aid – available through the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services Emergency Services Unit (NH DHHS ESU)
2. American Red Cross (ARC) <http://redcross.org/where/chapts.asp>
 - Pet and Human First Aid and Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation
 - Mass Care
 - Shelter Operations
 - Introduction to Disaster Services
3. Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) trainings
<http://www.citizencorps.gov/>
4. FEMA IS – 3 [Radiological Emergency Management](#)
5. FEMA IS – 5.a [An Introduction to Hazardous Materials](#)
6. FEMA IS – 800.b [National Response Framework, An Introduction](#)
7. http://www.humanesociety.org/about/departments/humane-society-academy/?credit=web_vanity_academy
8. Other national organizations offering disaster training:
 - American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.
www.ASPCA.org
 - RedRover www.RedRover.org
 - American Humane www.AmericanHumane.org

Engagement/Retention of Team Members

- 1) Hold monthly meetings (particularly when starting a team) or quarterly meetings
 - a. Invite speakers for different topics
 - b. Conduct table top drill exercises
- 2) Organize social events in between regular team meetings/trainings (picnics, parties, cookouts, dinners)
- 3) Hold team building exercises
- 4) Stay in contact with team members in between activations through email, trainings, updates, team newsletters, team meeting minutes, etc.

Municipal Outreach

- 1) Meet with local Emergency Management Directors
- 2) Work with the municipality to incorporate planning for pets in disasters into the local Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) (See Appendix J for sample plans for pets)
- 3) Assist towns with site selection for Pet Shelters if needed (See Appendix D – Helpful Checklists for a list of desirable qualities for a pet shelter site)
- 4) Assist towns with writing a Public Service Announcement to incorporate “pet friendly” designation as well as a list of what evacuees should bring with them when leaving home with their pet (such as vaccine certificates, leash, muzzle, food, medicines, special blanket, or toy)
- 5) Formal presentations/workshops for municipalities to showcase DART roles and responsibilities and how best to partner with towns

Credentialing and Identification

Any VDART team member that has completed the required Level 1 training and is part of a VDART deployable team shall be appropriately credentialed. All team members shall wear an Id badge that displays their name, the VDART logo and identification as a VDART volunteer. Badges must be in plain view and located above the waistline. The badge is to be worn at all times during a deployment. Only one badge will be issued for each volunteer. It is the responsibility of the holder to keep the badge in a safe place. If the badge is lost, a replacement may be issued at a nominal cost. The VDART badge has a white background with light green highlights, the VDART logo, the holders name and validation number as well as the date of issue.

Figure 3



Contact Information

Vermont Disaster Animal Response Team
PO Box 1423
White River Junction, VT 05001

Phone: (802) 368-2790

Website: www.VermontDART.org

Mail: mail@vermontdart.org

Facebook: facebook.com/VermontDART

Twitter:

Chapter 4

Safety

General Safety

Safety for VDART members must always be the first priority. VDART members are expected to contribute to the overall effort of personal and team safety. Work should not be undertaken unless all of the following conditions are met:

- a. A supervisor is aware of and approves of your present location and activities
- b. Response activities being undertaken are those assigned
- c. You are qualified (e.g. trained animal handler, boat or other equipment operator etc.)
- d. Conditions are safe, and your activities do not put yourself or others at risk
- e. One or more team members or volunteers are present to provide assistance if you are injured or in trouble. You should never work alone. Two is the minimum number of people to be present whenever there is contact with an animal
- f. Location of first aid supplies is known and readily available
- g. Qualified first aid or medical attendant is known and readily available
- h. Radio or line communication is fully functional to seek medical or rescue assistance
- i. Transportation to medical station is available
- j. Activities under your supervision or by others do not pose a risk to you or your team members

Cease activities and report immediately to a supervisor if any one of the above conditions is not present!

When in doubt...stop and ask! Report all accidents and injuries.

Shift Work

The very nature of a disaster means that certain hazards such as inclement weather, poor road conditions, flooding, power outages, downed power lines, working with stressed/fearful animals may be present. To add to that, emergency pet shelters may be operational 24/7. All this can make work conditions challenging at best. Team members must not be fatigued to the extent that their safety, the safety of others, the safety of the pets in their care, or the mission is compromised. Typical pet sheltering shifts can be anywhere from 3-24 hours. A recommended shift is no more than 12 hours. Team members staffing an emergency pet shelter should be replaced at a maximum of every 12 hours. A 12 hour shift must include breaks. Team leaders must relieve from duty, or replace, a fatigued team member that cannot function safely. Team members must report any unsafe conditions to their team leader/shelter manager.

Injuries

Injuries to members are to be reported to a supervisor immediately. The supervisor is to assess the extent of injuries and make a determination as to whether professional medical intervention is necessary. Initial rudimentary first aid can be administered such as washing/cleaning of minor cuts/abrasions. Each injury will be dealt with on an individual basis, and appropriate actions will be taken. An injury form must be filled out by the injured person, if possible. If this is not possible, a volunteer can fill out the form for the injured person. The form must be signed by the injured person, and the supervisor within 24 hours of injury (Refer to the Injury/Accident Form in Appendix C).

Disaster Behavioral Health Response

VDART members are to observe teammates for signs of work-related stress. Report any such signs to a supervisor as soon as possible. Regional Team Leaders and Shelter Managers are encouraged to submit a mission task request to the EOC in order to request assistance from the VT Disaster Behavioral Health Team (VTDBHRT) with VDART member debriefing throughout the response. Team members can use basic Psychological First Aid (PFA) approaches; see **Table 1** below, to assist team members and animal owners who are showing signs of fatigue or stress. The primary objective of PFA is to promote safety, create calm, and provide support.

Table 1. Overview of Psychological First Aid

5 Steps of PFA	Basic Principles	
1. Engage	➤ Promote Safety	➤ Encourage Goal Oriented Behavior
2. Stabilize	➤ Care for Basic Needs	➤ Re-Establish Routines
3. Gather Information	➤ Promote Calm	➤ Use Support Network
4. Develop and Implement Plan	➤ Validate Feelings	➤ Promote Connectedness
5. Follow-Up	➤ Let Them Tell Their Story	➤ Promote Health Coping
	➤ Use Supportive Communication	➤ Problem Solve & Instill Hope

Chapter 5

Special Guidance

Most special situations have common sense solutions and rarely constitute an emergency. It is outside the scope of this manual to provide guidance for every special circumstance that can arise; therefore in this section you will find the more “common” special situations.

Medical Emergencies

Medical emergencies do occur that may involve attendants, the public or an animal in the shelter.

- a) Stay Calm!
- b) Render the appropriate first aid if you are able to do so.
- c) If the medical emergency involves you, another attendant or a member of the public, immediately contact the EMS personnel on site at the shelter and/or other co-located general shelter medical personnel.
 - a. If they are not available, dial 911 and give the dispatcher the following information. Stay on the phone with 911 until you are told to hang up.
 - i. Your location,
 - ii. Your name, and
 - iii. Other information as requested.
- d) If the medical emergency involves an animal in the shelter, contact the animal’s owner as quickly as possible.
- e) Immediately contact the Emergency Animal Shelter Veterinarian who has been designated for your location. Follow his/her instructions.
- f) Do the best you can until qualified assistance arrives.
- g) When the medical emergency response has been turned over to someone else, note the emergency on the Unit Log.

Found or Rescued Animal

VDART does not engage in animal rescue operations. However, stray/abandoned/rescued animals may be dropped off at your emergency pet shelter location. Please check with the town in which you are sheltering. There may be requirements on the part of the town that no animal unless accompanied by the owner (the owner is co-located at the same shelter) may stay at the shelter. If this is the case, you may provide the owner with a list of Pet Friendly Hotels/motels/Bed and Breakfasts in Vermont (Appendix G), or provide them with the contact information of the nearest humane society or animal shelter (Appendix H). It is best to form a relationship or agreement with your local animal shelter regarding a policy of accepting pets prior to deployment. It is not a requirement to accept farm animals or livestock at the shelter according to the PETS Act. However, your team may have prepared and trained for this. Check with your Team Leader or the Vermont State Veterinarian prior to accepting or evacuating large

animals. Do not accept wildlife, but rather contact your local Game Warden (Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department) http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com/laws_contactwarden.cfm

If the situation arises and you take in stray/abandoned/rescued animals, keep the following in mind:

- a) Found or rescued animals will (most likely) have no identification.
- b) You will likely not know the medical condition or have access to any vaccination records.
- c) Follow your normal intake guidance and complete as much information as you can.
- d) Specifically note where the animal was found or rescued and by whom.
- e) Until you have additional information, isolate (as much as possible) the found or rescued animal.
- f) Provide as much care as possible including, but not limited to: food, water and appropriate shelter. Notify the on-call emergency veterinarian on emergency call of any apparent medical needs and follow his/her instructions.
- g) Make a note of the incident and let your Team Leader know.

Financial or Other Resource Contribution

If someone wishes to make a financial contribution, or a donation of animal supplies, you may accept donations under the following stipulations:

- 1) Cash contributions are **NOT** accepted
- 2) Checks should be made out to VDART. Place checks in a plain envelope and give to the Emergency Animal Shelter Manager as quickly as possible
- 3) Donations can be made to VDART at <http://www.vermontdart.org>
- 4) Pet food donations will be accepted if there is a *need* for food at your location *and* provided the pet food is factory sealed and there are no signs of tampering
- 5) Broken bags, partial bags or opened cans will not be accepted. Thank the person anyway and explain for health and safety reasons you cannot accept the donation. If the person leaves the items, dispose of them properly
- 6) You may accept donations of leashes, collars, kennels, cages, carriers, food dishes, and similar materials provided they are clean and in good condition

All requests for tax donation receipts should be referred to VDART (“Donations Received form in Appendix C)