

Care and Management of Animal During Disasters

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Disaster can strike anytime without notice. Therefore, we should be prepared to prevent or face it. In case disaster strikes, be it natural or man-made, we cannot completely avoid loss of animals. Only thing is that we can minimize the extent of loss when we are well prepared. First and foremost, thing we give priority during disaster is saving human lives by taking care or relocating the affected population.

However, the welfare of animals before, during and after disasters is equally important, with reference to the feed, safety and shelter, as they have significant effect on the wellbeing and productivity of the animals. While dealing with the emergencies during disaster, it is important to set priorities which has significant outcome. The priorities should be set in such a way that it will be a win-win situation for both humans and animals/livestock. The top most priority should be, of course, your own personal safety and welfare, followed by your family members, friends and other people, and finally animals and property. This prioritization is due to the fact that only if you are safe, you can help others and also the livestock/animals. One of the major factors which can reduce the intensity of loss of precious lives both humans and animals are the 'Animal Evacuation Policy Rules'. Well planned rules will help in smooth and quick evacuation of the affected animals without any confusion or chaos.

One of the major threats to human and animal lives after disaster is the quick spread of diseases. Proper disposal of carcasses will help in preventing spread of diseases. There are different types of losses which the animal caretaker encounters after disaster. The losses may be due to loss of animal, loss due to injury to the animal, loss due to no or reduced productivity, loss due to destruction of farm land/feed/ fodder production etc.

The care and management of animals to be practiced before, during and after disasters with special emphasis on feed, safety/security and shelter are as follows: -

1. Animal Care before Disasters

- If you are in a high risk/disaster zone, gather all the information related to particular disaster, be vigilant and prepared
- Prepare a disaster box for animals containing ropes/halters, concentrate feed, fodder/hay, medicines/supplements, important documents and records like insurance papers, buckets, flashlight or torch, blankets, first aid supplies etc.
- Be in touch with the local authorities and emergency response teams and get familiarized with their planning and preparedness. If possible, participate in the mock drills to get prepared for facing any emergency.
- Tune into television and radio broadcasts regularly for news updates and weather forecasts, especially if you are in coastal areas which are prone for floods, cyclones and tsunami.
- Preparing animals for a natural disaster will safeguard the welfare of your animals and assist with recovery after the event.
- Animal owners and caretakers have the responsibility to take care of the wellbeing of the animals by providing appropriate feed/fodder, water, shelter and treat the injured or diseased animals.
- Remove all the flammable items from the area in and around the animal shed.
- Always maintain a sufficient stock of feed, fodder, water and medicines and store them in a safe place.
- Confine animals in a safe and secluded place. They should be protected from direct sunlight by providing shade.
- Ensure that livestock can be identified to help facilitate their return in case they become lost and displaced.
- Maintain the registers/records up-to-date and in a safe place.

- Loose Objects should be tied properly in and around the shed. If not properly secured, they may become air-borne during high winds and injure the animals.

2. Animal Care during Disasters

"You respond to emergencies - you recover from a disaster."

In most circumstances during a disaster or emergency, the response time is practically limited. Therefore, it is important to have awareness on the pre-existing conditions so that we can respond to the situation quickly and promptly. Otherwise, you will have even less time to respond.

Animal Care during disaster varies with the type of disaster faced. For example, during drought/famine conditions (silent disaster), the key elements in the care and management of animals are food, water and shelter. Lack or scarcity of one or more of these elements results in slow but continuous loss of animals.

The following steps can be followed during disaster for addressing the needs of animals:

- Move them to a safe and comfortable shelter.
- Provide adequate feed/fodder and clean potable water.
- Handle the animals gently since they may get frightened or disorientated.
- Do not expose them to extreme stressful conditions.
- Contact the local veterinarian or officials regarding lost and found animals.
- Maintain adequate supplies of feed/fodder supplies.
- Effectively utilize the available feed/fodder so that it can last till the fresh stock arrive.

3. Animal Care after Disasters

Once the animals are relocated, the major issue which affects them is their security. Generally, animals relate safety and security to familiarity with the surroundings. Therefore, while relocating, if possible, care should be taken to move them to a place where it mimics their familiar surrounding like the feel, smell, layout etc.

Once, you move them to a familiar and safe location, the following care and management can be practiced:-



- **Feed:** Feed/fodder and water play a significant role in the disaster recovery. Animals should have access to good quality feed and fodder or pasture since they are highly sensitive to smell and taste.
- **Water:** Ensure that animals have access to good quality potable water. Animals should not be allowed to consume the stagnant or dirty or floodwater.
- **Shelter:** During disasters like flood or earthquake, most of the structures in the shed might get damaged or destroyed. They should be brought back to their shelter only after ensuring that the existing structures are safe and secure. Do not overcrowd and provide adequate space to the animals since they are already under stress.
- **Safety:** While relocating the animals, care should be taken to protect the animals from flooded areas, live power lines, debris etc. Protect the animals from wild animals, predators, insects etc. Clean or wash the animals with clean water to get rid of any dirt or debris.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitoring: Once the animals are relocated and gets settled, it is important to monitor them regularly in order to ensure that they are | comfortable. If diseased or injured, treat the animals under the supervision of veterinarian. |
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