

Animal Issues Committee (AIC)

Steps for Setting up an AIC & Writing the AIC Plan

Emergencies and disasters frequently involve animals as well as people. Consequently, animals should be an integral part of any phase of emergency management activity. The State of Texas strongly encourages local emergency management authorities to form an Animal Issues Committee (AIC) to bring together community partners, with varying types of animal expertise, to address animal issues in emergencies/disasters, considering both disease and non-disease related topics.

There are two (2) pieces of legislation which outline mandates, from both a federal and state level, regarding animals during disasters:

Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act of 2006

“Amends the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to require the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to ensure that state and local emergency preparedness operational plans address the needs of individuals with household pets and service animals prior to, during, and following a major disaster or emergency.”

Texas HB-88, ‘Simba’s Law’

Amends the Government Code to require the State of Texas to “assist political subdivisions in developing plans for the humane evacuation, transport, and temporary sheltering of service animals and household pets in a disaster.”

Organization

The AIC may be chaired by the Emergency Management Coordinator, the Texas AgriLife Extension Agent, or any other competent animal and/or agriculturally oriented individual. Consider who in the community can serve as an advisor to the group to help solve animal-related emergency or disaster issues. Examples include animal control officers/Sheriff’s department livestock deputies, veterinarians, Ag teachers, vet technicians, AgriLife Extension Agent, or representatives from the animal industry, etc. The AIC should meet as often as necessary at a time and place determined by committee members.



Responsibilities

When the AIC has been formed, the next important step will be to evaluate the community vulnerabilities that could affect animals, and resources available for response. Consider both non-disease and disease related topics.

Non-disease:

- **Animal Sheltering & Care:** Where will animals be sheltered? Will large and small animals be sheltered at the same location? Are there enough volunteers to manage the shelters?
- **Animal Evacuation & Transportation:** What is the plan to help evacuate animals with their humans? How will animals be identified, relocated, and reunited with owners? How are the animals going to be transported?
- **Animal Search & Rescue:** Who will do it? What are their capabilities? Where will the animals be transported once they are out of danger?
- **Carcass Disposal/Removal:** Where will carcasses be moved to and how? Can they be buried on site? What are other options?
- **Security:** Is there local law enforcement that can provide security for the shelter? Who else could provide security?
- **Medical Care & Euthanasia:** Is there a local veterinarian who can provide medical care to injured animals? Who is authorized to handle humane euthanasia?

Foreign Animal Disease (FAD):

- **Coordination & Response:** Are local authorities, such as the county judge, law enforcement, and other officials, aware of the fundamental difference between emergency response to FAD and emergency response to other types of disasters? The response to a FAD outbreak will immediately be led by state and/or federal authorities. For more details regarding this type of incident, please see the “Foreign Animal Disease Response Guide for Locals.”
- **County profile:** What concentrated animal feeding or other animal production, processing, marketing, and carcass disposal facilities/operations are in the community? Where are they located? What are their sizes and agricultural demographics?
- **Equipment & Vehicles:** What local resources (tractors, backhoes, dump trucks, incinerators, landfills), public or private, are available for transportation of diseased animals and animal products for slaughter and/or disposal?
- **Disposal sites:** What locations can be used to dispose of diseased carcasses, while minimizing the spread of disease? Where are they located? How many locations are available?

Once the AIC has identified animal-related vulnerabilities in the community, a local functional response plan should be developed and incorporated into local plans, where relevant.

Guidance Questions

The questions provided below are intended to further assist in identifying vulnerabilities and resource analysis.

1. What natural and man-made disasters might occur in the community? How does geographic location influence emergency planning? What facilities are utilized as resources when planning for localized disasters?
2. What agricultural and animal issues exist? Does the community have large populations of animals or herds, food animal production facilities, large numbers of people with companion animals, livestock markets, or any other area or system that involves animals? If a large animal industry is present, has a representative of this industry been included in the AIC?



3. What other industries need to be considered as additional hazards or resources? Does the community have petrochemical, manufacturing, or technology-oriented industries, and should representatives of these industries be included in the AIC meetings?
4. Does the community shelter people and animals in a large-scale disaster or does it evacuate? Are there animal shelters, sale barns, civic centers, or other locations in which people and/or animals can be sheltered? If evacuating, what is the reentry plan/process, especially if post-incident sheltering is needed?
5. What procedures regarding animals already exist, and do these need to be incorporated into the planning process? For example, how are stray livestock dealt with? What standard operating procedures are already in place for local animal shelters?

It is important for jurisdictions to consider all potential needs, including planning for companion animals, livestock, and other types of animals in the community. The most effective way to identify and address community vulnerabilities related to animals is to create and continually engage in an Animal Issues Committee. Level of success will depend highly on the committee's level of engagement and continued evaluation of resources. AIC plans are critical to a jurisdiction's ability to handle and respond to emergency situations involving animals.

Animal Issues Committee (AIC) Process

1. Local EMC (or AgriLife Extension agent, if requested by the EMC) assembles an AIC
2. Use the "AIC Guidance Document" to help the group move forward:
 - a. Refine AIC membership to ensure appropriate agencies are represented for all animal issues
 - b. Evaluate community vulnerabilities that could affect animals
 - c. Decide which disaster response "functions" and "events" are most important
 - d. Locate resources available in the community
3. The AIC, in coordination with the EMC, writes the "AIC Plan" to be incorporated with existing community plans upon approval by local authorities.

A template can be found on the TDEM website: Annex N_Direction and Control_Appendix 4_Animal Issues Committee Plan (<https://www.tdem.texas.gov/preparedness/local-planning>).
4. Begin the local emergency response planning process
 - a. Use the Community Animal Response Priorities (CARP) guide to plan for response functions
 - i. Adequately address each response function and provide ideas and solutions to address issues identified
 - ii. Locate information sources to assist in the development of standard operating procedures for the response conducted by the community
 - iii. Prepare a CARP for each response function identified, or each response function can be combined into one comprehensive CARP
 - b. Determine which AIC member(s) are most appropriate to address response functions
 - c. Create a subgroup/subcommittee of those identified members, if necessary
5. Upon approval by local authorities, the AIC will coordinate with the EMC to incorporate the CARP into the community Emergency Management Plan
6. The AIC will review the AIC Plan and CARP on a regular basis and exercise the CARP to ensure it remains applicable to the community's needs
7. Utilize the Texas A&M VET (Veterinary Emergency Team) to help develop tactical plans for sheltering, evacuation, and veterinary medical care (<https://vetmed.tamu.edu/vet/outreach>).

Having an AIC is not legally required; however, an AIC is extremely valuable. For assistance with initiating an AIC, email the TAHC Emergency Management Department (emcoord@tahc.texas.gov).

