Promoting the Safety of Horses during Disasters

Engaging Horse Owners in Their Local Community Exchange or the County Animal Response Team

Tag Words: Horses, Natural Disasters, County Animal Response Team, Community Exchange

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Summary: Many horse owners in the U.S. do not know what they would do with their horse in the case of an emergency. Some horse owners will threaten their own safety by trying to get their horse out of a dangerous situation, this can lead to fatal accidents. Other horse owners may have to leave their horses behind, jeopardizing the chances of their horses’ survival. By joining local Animal County Response Teams, horse owners will become FEMA trained first responders and will learn how to help protect and save the lives of horses in their community during disasters. Horse owners can work together with their neighbors through a community time exchange. This time exchange allows people to trade services free of cost. Horse services can be exchanged for anything from handyman services to babysitting services, and vice versa.

Video Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eFRbjuen_hM

Horses in the U.S.
The American Horse Council of Washington, D.C. estimates that there are 9.2 million horses in the United States. The council also estimates that 4.6 million Americans are involved in the horse industry of which 2.0 million are horse owners with the remaining upholding roles as service providers, employees, and volunteers. Tens of millions more participate as spectators (1). The abundance of horses in the U.S. has an impact on the economy generating 39 billion dollars annually and paying 1.9 billion dollars in taxes to all levels of government. (1). People have lived alongside horses for thousands of years. The ASPCA lists horses as a suitable companion animal. (2). People build close bonds and relationships with their horses. The American Veterinary Medical Association found that more than one-third of all horse owners considered their horses to be part of the family (3). In the case of disasters many people do not feel comfortable leaving their horses behind. FEMA acknowledges that some people are more concerned for their animals in disasters than they are for themselves. This can impair people's judgement and the ability to make smart decisions about their own safety. This can lead to evacuation failures and unsafe rescue attempts. There have been reports of owners being injured or killed during attempts to rescue their animals in emergencies. FEMA promotes the care of animals in disasters because it is important to the care of people (4).

Do You Have a Plan?
Being prepared at all times will ensure the safety of you and your horse. The average horse weighs around 1000 pounds. Horses cannot be carried out of a dangerous area or placed into a car. Their only hope for transportation in the case of an evacuation is by trailer. Dennis French, DVM, professor at the University Of Illinois College Of Veterinary Medicine, notes the importance of having a functional trailer ready to go at a moment’s notice. Horses must be trained ahead of time to load trailers so that they know what to expect in the case of an
emergency evacuation (5). Preparing your horse before the storm is crucial to the effectiveness of an evacuation plan. Practice evacuation and fire drills with your horses, even in the middle of the night. Use flashlights so your horses become used to them. Disasters can happen at any time. Horses also need to be up to date on all of their vaccinations. Dana N. Zimmel, DVM, ACVIM, ABVP (Equine Practice), University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine states that all horses should have a tetanus toxoid vaccine within the last year. Horses should receive West Nile Virus and Easter/Western Encephalitis vaccines at the beginning of the hurricane season because of the increase in mosquitoes following massive rainfall. She also notes that a negative Coggins test is necessary for a horse to be evacuated to a community shelter or cross the state line. A health certificate is also required to cross state lines (6). FEMA shares the importance of horse identification before and after disasters, “In large-scale disasters when many animals are evacuated, identification of the animals and their owners is difficult” (4). Ideally every horse should be uniquely and permanently identified. Identification allows the owner to positively identify their animal and allows others to trace the owner. Horses can be permanently identified by microchips, freeze marking or tattoos. Owners should have current front and side view photographs of all horses as proof of ownership. If horses do not have any form of identification and need to be evacuated suddenly, emergency identification methods are as follows: identification tags on halters; body marking with crayon; clipping phone numbers of farm initials in the hair; neck banding; glue on numbers; painting or etching the hooves (4).

Additional Preparation
Numerous websites such as the Horse Fund, Equus Magazine, and the New Jersey Department of Agriculture offer additional disaster preparation and guidelines. An updated list of all horses on the farm should include: what paddock/pasture/or stall they are kept in; who are their owners/contact person; list of regular veterinarians. Plan to have enough food and water for 72 hours. A sudden change in a horse’s diet will cause them to get sick. Arrange in advance safe locations to board your horses at if your property becomes unsafe (7). Create a detailed plan and follow it. The Humane Society does not recommend leaving your horse behind. An environment that is not safe for you will not be safe for your horse (8). If for some reason you cannot evacuate your horse, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture advises to leave horses in the area most appropriate for the type of disaster anticipated, such as high ground in the case of a flood (9). Rebecca McConnico, DVM, PhD, ACVIM, associate professor of Veterinary Medicine at Louisiana State University says, “Coordinating area disaster response plans can and should involve the entire equine community” (6). Involve family and neighbors to put together a plan. Utilize experts who know how to prepare horses and their owners for emergencies. Encourage people to volunteer their time and join a CART. The NJDA states that “Help starts at home, prepare yourself first before you help others and join a CART” (9).

What is a CART?
CART stands for County Animal Response Team. The New Jersey Department of Agriculture’s definition of a cart is as follows; a group of volunteers and other entities, such as government agencies and the private sector, with resources and personnel to respond to animal issues in disasters (9). CARTs base their principles on an Incident Command System created by FEMA. They operate under each County Office of Emergency Management. CARTs plan, work, and train with numerous other responder entities to provide a coordinated disaster response. CARTs need volunteers to work together to prepare, plan, and train together in order to be ready to
respond if a disaster strikes. Other voluntary organizations for animal assistance and rescue in disasters include community and statewide Animal Response Teams including SART/CART programs and a wide array of similar programs under many names. For instance in February 2008, 87 tornadoes hit Tennessee over a two day period. Tennessee’s local Disaster Animal Response Teams (DARTs) helped with the response and recovery of livestock. They transported livestock, constructed temporary shelters for livestock and household pets, and captured stray animals (4). Their actions along with countless other DARTs, SARTs, and CARTs, help protect and save the lives of animals during disasters.

Community Action: Engaging Monmouth County NJ Horse Owners in Emergency Preparedness Programs

Monmouth CART
Take action in your community and become a member of the Monmouth County Animal Response Team. The Monmouth Cart provides community awareness of disaster planning and preparedness for the animals. The Monmouth Cart operates under the direction of the Monmouth County Sheriff’S office and the Office of Emergency Management. The Monmouth CART needs volunteers of various skills, expertise, and resources (10). Visit the Monmouth CART’s brochure for more information: http://www.mcsonj.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/CARTBrochure.pdf. To become a member of the Monmouth CART you will need to complete the required FEMA online training courses. These courses will ensure your knowledge of how disaster preparedness, prevention, emergency plans, etc. work. There are two courses required for all first responders 1). IS-100.B: Introduction to Incident Command System, ICS-100 and 2). IS-700.A: National Incident Management System (NIMS) An Introduction. These courses can take around 2-3 hours each to complete. The next three required courses are 3). IS-10.A: Animals in Disasters: Awareness and Preparedness 4). IS-11.A: Animals in Disasters: Community Planning and lastly 5). IS-111.A: Livestock in Disasters (10). These courses will take around 2.5-3.5 hours each to complete.

Monmouth County NJ Strong
A less formal and no training required way to become prepared for disasters is to join your community exchange. In 2013, Dr. Julie Fagan, Associate Professor at Rutgers University, developed a free community exchange for every county in New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania (11). These community exchanges allow people to work with their neighbors. In the case of a disaster, power outages will prevent communication by cell phone or internet. The only resources we will have are our neighbors. These types of exchanges could take place before a disaster occurred. For example one could provide handyman services to their neighbor. In return they would request horse care or boarding during an emergency. All of these exchanges are free of cost. Simply state your county state strong such as Monmouth County NJ State Strong, and become a member for free. The Monmouth County NJ Strong website is available here: https://www.hourworld.org/bank/?hw=1283.

Reaching Out to Local Horse Owners
I have reached out to multiple horse owners in Monmouth County with the hopes of spreading the word about the importance of horse preparedness. The following was sent to about a dozen horse owners, and will be sent to places such as “The Tack Shelter” in Colts Neck NJ, a popular spot for horse owners.
Dear Horse Owner,
Do you know what you would do with your horse in the case of an emergency? It is important to stay prepared and plan ahead to protect the lives of you and your horse. Consider joining the Monmouth County Animal Response Team (CART). By joining your local CART you will become a FEMA trained first responder and work with your community before, during, and after natural disasters and emergencies to protect the animals in your county. In addition, become a member of a new community exchange system called “Monmouth County NJ State Strong.” Join the “Horses” group after becoming a member and list services you can provide to a neighbor and find services you may need, such as a place to bring your horse in the case of an emergency, free of cost. You can also provide services unrelated to horse care such as cleaning or handyman services. In the worst of disasters, the best of help will come from your neighbors and your community. Work together, stay prepared, and spread the word!
If interested in joining the Monmouth CART or the Monmouth County NJ State Strong and for more information email me at [email address withheld] or call [telephone number withheld].

Gina Giunta

Response
Many of the horse owners I reached out to were happy to join the Monmouth County NJ State Strong website, after learning there is no prerequisites to join, and membership is free. They have been instructed to join the “Horses” group and list the services they can provide. The acceptance towards this part was great, however not as much support was given to the idea of joining the Monmouth CART which requires more time and action. Our community needs trained CART volunteers of various skills in order to effectively promote the safety of horses during disasters. Horse owners who said they were not interested in becoming a CART member are asked to provide me with their anonymous answers to the survey listed in the Appendix of this paper as I am involved in a research study that is looking into how to better market disaster preparedness. Those that are interested in joining the CART will have their contact information forwarded to the Monmouth CART leader to start their training process.

References


(4) Animals in Disasters: The Care of Livestock and Horses in Disasters. (2013). FEMA.


**Appendices**

**Survey Instrument**

Your willingness to complete this brief 3 question survey is much appreciated. Your feedback, which is anonymous, will assist us in identifying important features of volunteer and disaster preparedness programs that entice individuals to participate.

After informing you about the Monmouth Community Animal Response Team (CART) and the Monmouth County NJ Strong community exchange, you opted not to sign up for one or both today.

I. Identify 5 reasons for your not wanting to join (circle which) the CART or the Monmouth County NJ Strong community exchange. Rank in order of importance to you, with #1 being the most important.

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II. List 5 features/ideas/marketing strategies might we incorporate that would make you want to join the Rutgers CART. Rank in order of importance to you, with #1 being the most important.

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III. Tell Us About Yourself

Year of Birth _________________
Gender ________________
Relationship Status (Married, single, student, living with parent/children?) _________________
Race/Ethnicity ________________________
Average Monthly Expendable Income _____________________
Highest Level of Education _____________________
Current Status: Employed? / Full-time student? _____________________
Connectedness: Approximate time per day not related to your employment or schooling that you spend surfing the internet (including Facebook) and viewing media on your smart devices (phone, tablet, computer). _____________________

THANK YOU

Letter to the Editor

Sent to Asbury Park Press at http://static.app.com/contactus-form/ and yourviews@app.com

Dear Editor,

Please consider publishing:
At eight years old, when I discovered my love for all things horses and dogs, I knew I wanted to spend the rest of my life helping and caring for animals. Now as a student at Rutgers University majoring in Animal Science, I continuously look for things I can do to give back to the animals around me. I learned about County Animal Response Teams. They are intended to help prepare and protect people and their animals during, before, and after and disasters. I decided to volunteer my time and complete the required FEMA emergency training courses (required for all first responders). Simply search your county CART, for example the Monmouth County Animal Response Team, to get involved. More information on the Monmouth CART can be found at: http://www.mcsonj.org/divisions/emergency-management/county-animal-response-team-cart/.

I also engaged in a community time exchange developed by Dr. Julie Fagan, Associate Professor at Rutgers. This community time exchange established networks in every county of NJ, NY, and PA. Simply search your “County State Strong” for example “Monmouth County NJ State Strong.” Sign up and become a member for free and enjoy the benefits of time banking. Provide dog walking, babysitting, or cleaning services to a neighbor and get back what you need in return, perhaps somewhere to take your horses in the case of a disaster at your farm, all free of cost! Connect with your community and work together to protect the lives of the people and animals around you.

Gina Giunta