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Wednesday, March 25, 2009

# AVMA, AVMF, Red Cross Enter Agreement to Coordinate Animal Rescue Efforts and Programs



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SCHAUMBURG, Ill., March 25, 2009 /PRNewswire-USNewswire via COMTEX/ ----The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA: undefined, undefined, undefined%) and the American Veterinary Medical Foundation (AVMF: undefined, undefined, undefined%) have signed a partnership agreement with the American Red Cross to help protect animals and pets during emergencies.

"The American Red Cross is proud to continue our partnership with the American Veterinary Medical Association," explains Mary DeWitt-Dia, senior associate at the Red Cross. "Through our continued collaboration and coordination we will be able to help our communities better prepare for and respond to the needs of families and animals before, during and after disaster."

The three groups have had a statement of understanding since 1998, but last month they penned a more formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU: 9.75, 0, 0%) that lays out the groundwork for increased cooperation between the national organizations. The AVMF is the charitable branch of the AVMA that funds disaster response and emergency preparedness training and accepts charitable contributions on behalf of these efforts.

"This partnership with the Red Cross will help American Veterinary Medical Foundation bring substantive help to pets and animals not only on the national level but at the local level. It gives us a hands-on network of people who will work around our goal of helping pets in times of a disaster," explains Michael Cathey, head of the AVMF. "This is an exciting new chapter in the AVMF's outreach efforts."

The AVMF will help fund programs developed under this cooperative arrangement through AVMF grants. The AVMA will serve as a technical adviser to the Red Cross on all animal and veterinary related aspects of disaster-response efforts.

It's estimated that during a major natural disaster, like a hurricane or forest fire, approximately 100,000 animals, pets and livestock are separated from their owners and/or lost. Many times pet owners are forced to leave their pets behind during a disaster because they haven't appropriately prepared for evacuation. Sometimes pet owners have been prepared but local or state disaster plans have not been written to accommodate for the evacuation of animals. One of the goals of the MOU is to reverse this trend.

"I am eager to see how we can collectively address challenges in disaster preparedness and response as we look to prepare families for the unexpected," explains Dr. Heather Case, AVMA coordinator for emergency preparedness and response. "This new MOU is a call to action for both groups and will allow us to develop new programs on the local level to meet the challenges."

Dr. Case said that the renewed cooperation between the AVMA and the Red Cross is already starting to bear fruit. For example, the Chicago chapter of the Red Cross and the AVMA have been meeting to address a problem of common concern following house fires: temporary housing for pets. The Red Cross provides temporary housing for the victims of fires but cannot currently accommodate pets.

"Many people choose to sleep in their cars simply because they can't find a home for their pets," Dr. Case explains.

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