

The State of Affairs

Organizing State Conferences

Most state associations hold annual training conferences and meetings. Often it can be a daunting task to know where to begin and how to budget your time when it comes to organizing this event. Take a look through any of the animal welfare or law enforcement publications and you will see that a wide variety of seminar and conference topics are available. Conferences offer your members ongoing educational and networking opportunities to help them do their jobs more efficiently and provide them some validation for the frustrations that they feel. These conferences also draw newcomers into our network.

When organizing a conference, its best to give your self six months or more, depending on the size of the group you're planning on attracting. The following checklist will ensure that you cover the bases for running a successful conference:

1. Choose the theme - What issues are obviously the most current or generating the most attention in our field in your state? Have you had requests for a specific topic or method that can be explored in greater depth than you're able to on a regular basis? Do you have a mentor that you know your members would benefit from hearing or seeing? Is there an individual who's providing seminars around the country but hasn't been in your area yet?

2. Choose a date - You'll actually do better to choose two or three dates, and as you contact presenters you'll narrow your choices to a final selection. Check with other neighboring state association calendars as well as local and regional animal welfare or law enforcement training calendars. What other activities are taking place on the same date? How will these other activities impact your ability to fill your conference? Does your date fall during a school vacation or national holiday? Do you want it to? If you're planning during winter, and some potentially conflicting dates haven't been announced yet, you may be able to refer to back issues of trade publications to find out when other organizations typically hold their events. It's no guarantee, of course, and you'll also discover it's difficult *not* to conflict with something. Some try to hold their conferences on the same week of a particular month every year.

3. Decide where to hold the conference - Will you hold the conference at a hotel or a law enforcement training center? Factors to consider are: easy access for travelers, parking, meeting space, availability of food, rest room capacity, affordable hotel rooms, and rotating cities around the state.

4. Draw up a conference budget - All your costs need to be included here: speakers fees and travel expenses, facility rental, printing and postage costs to mail flyers, long distance phone calls, awards, food (banquet and breaks) and printing costs for handout materials. This will help you determine the fee to attend. If the fee seems out of line, consider approaching local businesses or national organizations as sponsors to help cover costs and to give them exposure. Nowadays, many state associations offer an exhibit area for vendors of commonly used products. These exhibitors may sponsor a meal to help with costs.

5. Work with the key speakers to publicize the event - Frequently, national organizations will offer their staff to give presentations for limited costs. These groups really know how to get the word out! Ask your presenters to give you a brief biography and a list of accomplishments and a photo. Ask that the

NACA 2004

Training Calendar

Level 1 Academy

March 8-12, 2004
Hartford, CT

May 24-28, 2004
Dallas, TX

June 7-11, 2004
Denver, CO

July 19-23, 2004
Norfolk, VA

August 23-27, 2004
Moreno, CA

October 11-15, 2004
Columbus, OH

October 25-29, 2004
Tulsa, OK

November 15-19, 2004
Nashville, TN

December 13-17, 2004
Kansas City, MO

PA Humane Officer's
April 26-30, 2004
Harrisburg, PA

WI Humane Officer's
September 13-17, 2004
Madison, WI

NACA Annual Training Conference

May 17-19, 2004
Daytona Beach, Florida

For more information, go to
our website: www.nacanet.org

NACA 2004

Training Calendar

Level 2 Academy

April 5-9, 2004
New Orleans, LA

May 3-7, 2004
Kansas City, MO

June 21-25, 2004
Atlanta, GA

July 12-16, 2004
Louisville, KY

August 9-13, 2004
Salt Lake City, UT

October 18-22, 2004
Sacramento, CA

November 1-5, 2004
Charleston, SC

Level 3 Academy

September 20-24, 2004
Kansas City, MO

December 6-10, 2004
Albuquerque, NM

Chemical Immobilization Certification

Chemical Immobilization, Bite Stick
and Euthanasia are offered within
Level 3 as separate classes.

Bite Stick Certification
(See Level 3 Schedule.)

Euthanasia Certification
(See Level 3 Schedule.)

For more information visit:
www.nacanet.org

**Want to find out how you can
bring NACA training to your
area?**

**Contact NACA at:
naca@interserv.com or call
913-768-1319**

speakers also include your conference in any announcement they make regarding their schedule or itinerary.

6. Send calendar announcements to the trade publications three months before the event - For example, if your event will be held November 15, you will get the best exposure by letting people know starting in September. This means that a monthly publication needs to have the information by mid July or early August. Your calendar listing will then appear in September, October and November. Bi-monthly publications (*NACA News*, *Shelter Pages*) need earlier notification.

7. Submit advertising three months in advance of the event - People will learn about your conference in several ways. Some will see it in the training calendars, some will read about it in your state newsletter, some will receive the flyer in the mail, and some may see it on your website or in a mass e-mail message; others will see it in a media release. If you want to draw from a large geographical area, the trade publications are a good place to advertise.

8. Prepare media releases - Send these to trade publications and local newspapers. Most trade publications are monthly or bi-monthly so be sure that the press releases arrive in order to be placed in the publication just prior to your conference. For example, for a July event, you must submit your press release to *NACA News* by no later than April 10 for it to appear in the May/June issue. Local newspapers are either daily or weekly and the press release should arrive to be placed a week before the event. You may draw some folks from outside your regular network and generate new members. Include: WHO is featured, WHAT the program is about, WHY folks should attend (what the attendees will work on or learn), WHERE and WHEN the conference will be held and HOW to register.

9. Make good use of your mailing list - Postcards are cheap. Or you can mail out flyers that include

a registration form along with deadlines, directions to the event, cancellation policy and who to contact for more information. Send these to all ACOs, humane societies, animal rescue groups, dog obedience clubs, veterinary and veterinary technician associations. Depending upon the topics, you may want to include emergency management or wildlife rehabilitators, too. Be inclusive! You can never have too many resources and some of the best knowledge we gain is from networking with others.

10. Recruit volunteers - Besides your conference committee members, you will need additional volunteers during the conference to be sure things go smoothly. Jobs include: Setting up the meeting room, working the registration desk, strategically locating signs for parking, meeting rooms and rest rooms, greeting attendees, moderating the program, seeing to the needs of the speakers, making sure audio visual equipment works well, liaison to the restaurant and/or hotel manager, presenting awards, organizing cleanup, and driving speakers to and from the airport and hotel.

11. Make evaluation forms available - Whether you hand them out, include them in the program or leave them on the registration desk, evaluations can help you to make improvements for future years. You'll get a better response to these if you make them part of a free drawing. Keep the evaluation brief, easy to answer, with room for comments.

12. Send thank yous - Be sure to send a letter of thanks to the site (hotel, etc.) manager, all volunteers, speakers, sponsors, and conference committee members. These folks will all be pleased to work with you again if you have given them appropriate consideration. This is a professional courtesy that will build long term good will for your organization, as well as for the field of animal care and control.

*Amy Suarez, NACA Program
Specialist*

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