

ANIMAL



CARE & CONTROL TODAY

From Ashes to Action: Animal Welfare's Role in Disaster Response



WHEN DISASTER STRIKES, ANIMAL WELFARE TEAMS ARE A VITAL FORCE IN COMMUNITY RECOVERY. FROM EMERGENCY SHELTERING TO LIFESAVING RESCUES, DISCOVER HOW AGENCIES AND VOLUNTEERS STEP UP WHEN EVERY SECOND COUNTS. THIS ISSUE UNPACKS LESSONS LEARNED, EXPERT STRATEGIES, AND STORIES OF HOPE RISING FROM THE HARDEST MOMENTS.

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As we look ahead to the refreshing blooms and renewed life of spring 2025, I'm reminded of the spirit of growth and possibility that defines our animal care and control community. This season symbolizes new beginnings, and with it comes a renewed commitment to our shared mission. The past year has been marked by both challenges and progress, and as we continue to navigate the complexities of animal welfare, the dedication and resilience of our community remain steadfast.

This spring, we face ongoing issues such as increasing demands on shelters, limited resources, and the need for innovative approaches to community animal care. However, I'm inspired daily by the determination of our animal care and control professionals, who continuously strive to find solutions and ensure the well-being of both animals and the communities we serve.

In this issue, we highlight some of the groundbreaking strategies and partnerships being employed across the country to address these persistent challenges. We celebrate the stories of innovation, collaboration, and success—stories that remind us why this work is so vital. From innovative community outreach programs to successful animal rescue and rehabilitation efforts, these stories reflect our unwavering commitment to making a difference.

While the road ahead may still be filled with obstacles, I remain hopeful. The strength of our community lies in our ability to come together, share knowledge, and support one another. As we embrace the energy and renewal that spring brings, let's continue to push forward with courage, creativity, and a deep sense of purpose. Together, we can create a brighter future for animals and the people who care for them.

Thank you for your dedication and hard work. Here's to a season of growth, resilience, and hope.

Jerrica Owen

Jerrica Owen
Executive Director



UPCOMING TRAININGS



Every Monday: Community Conversations, Maddie's Fund!

- **April 24th** - Pioneering the Path: Innovations in Field Services our Communities Need (Webinar)
- **April 15th - 18th** - Humane World for Animals Expo (Las Vegas NV)
- **April 29th** - Boundry-Setting with Clarity and Compassion (Webinar)
- **April 29th** - Redefining Resistance: Getting Comfortable with The Uncomfortable (Webinar)
- **April 28th** - Alabama Animal Control Association Conference
- **May 1st** - Ask Me Anything: About the Generations at Work (Webinar)
- **May 3rd** - TNR Workshop (Online)
- **May 6th** - Bubble Baths are not Enough: The Anxiety Behind Stress and Burnout (Webinar)
- **May 6th** - Maximizing social media for Animal Reunification during disasters or Emergencies for Animal Shelters (Webinar)
- **May 6-9th** - Michigan Association of Animal Control Officers Conference (Mackinaw Island, Michigan)
- **May 7th - 10th** - Texas Unites for Animals
- **May 8th** - Blueprints and Principals: The Architecture of a Modern Animal Services Program (Webinar)
- **May 8th** - Five Reasons Your Staff Wellness Program is Going to Fail (Webinar)
- **May 15th** - HOA's and Wildlife Friendly Programs (Webinar)
- **May 29th** - What's New in EQ (Webinar)
- **June 1st - 3rd** - Illinois Animal Welfare Federation Prairie States Conference (Bloomington IL)
- **June 2nd** - So, You Want To Be The Boss? (Webinar)
- **June 11th - 13th** - Mountain Animal Welfare Summit (Montana)
- **June 12th** - A Dog Named It (Webinar)

THE LEARNING DOESN'T STOP HERE! VISIT OUR ONLINE CALENDAR FOR A FULL LINEUP OF EVENTS AND TRAINING SESSIONS

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- Communication as a Tool
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An advertisement for the 'Code Officer Safety Specialist' online course. It features a blue background with a police officer in the foreground. The text includes: 'HAVE YOU BEEN THREATENED OR ATTACKED? TAKE OUR HIGHLY ACCLAIMED TRAINING!'. It lists the course modules: Tactical Mindset, Fear Management, Verbal De-escalation, 3 Phases of a Contact, and Surviving a Violent Encounter. A quote from a participant states: 'I THOUGHT THIS WAS THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE, PRACTICAL, CLEAR AND VALUABLE TRAINING I HAVE PARTICIPATED IN. IN MY OPINION, THIS TRAINING SHOULD BE REQUIRED FOR EVERY AGENCY'. At the bottom, it says: 'GET THIS 15-HOUR COURSE AT -66% OFF! EARN NACA & CALANIMALS CEU'S! WWW.CODEOFFICERSAFETY.ORG/COSS'.

CART BEFORE THE STORM: CREATING ANIMAL RESPONSE TEAMS THAT STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES

Written by Dr. Claudia Sonders, DVM + Contributions, edits and photographs by Angelina Martin

Over the past decade, wind-driven wildfires have scarred the West Coast, leaving vulnerable communities facing impossible situations. Most recently, the 2025 LA fires erupted under extreme Red Flag conditions, a dangerous combination of hurricane-force winds (70-100 mph), critically low humidity and heavy fuel loads. With Southern California receiving little rainfall to offset the seasonal Santa Ana winds, the fire spread rapidly, making containment nearly impossible. As flames raced across the landscape, overwhelming first responders on the front lines, the priority became clear: saving human lives.

For millions of Americans, pets aren't just animals - they're family. In fact, 70% of households have a pet. 80% of American pet owners consider their pet a member of their family. When disaster strikes in such a sudden and life-threatening way, many animals get left behind or are evacuated in a "run for your life" chaotic manner. If there is no pre-designated plan for the animals, community members may take matters into their own hands. They can either refuse to comply with evacuation orders and/or return to evacuated zones, potentially risking the lives of first responders. When we promote the animal component of response, we do so in full understanding of the impact for human life and safety.



In California, Animal Control Officers (ACOs) or Humane Officers are charged with leading the animal component of disaster response, integrated into their county emergency operations center. Understanding that most counties are understaffed, current workloads leave little time for disaster planning and community outreach to enhance preparedness for the animal component of an emergency. As such, when a large-scale event unfolds, animal shelters and ACOs can become rapidly overwhelmed.

Establishing an integrated Community Animal Response Team (CART) can create community resilience through disaster preparation, emergency response efforts, and recovery; improving outcomes for animals. A well-established CART can help close the gap in response time and elevate welfare for the animal component.

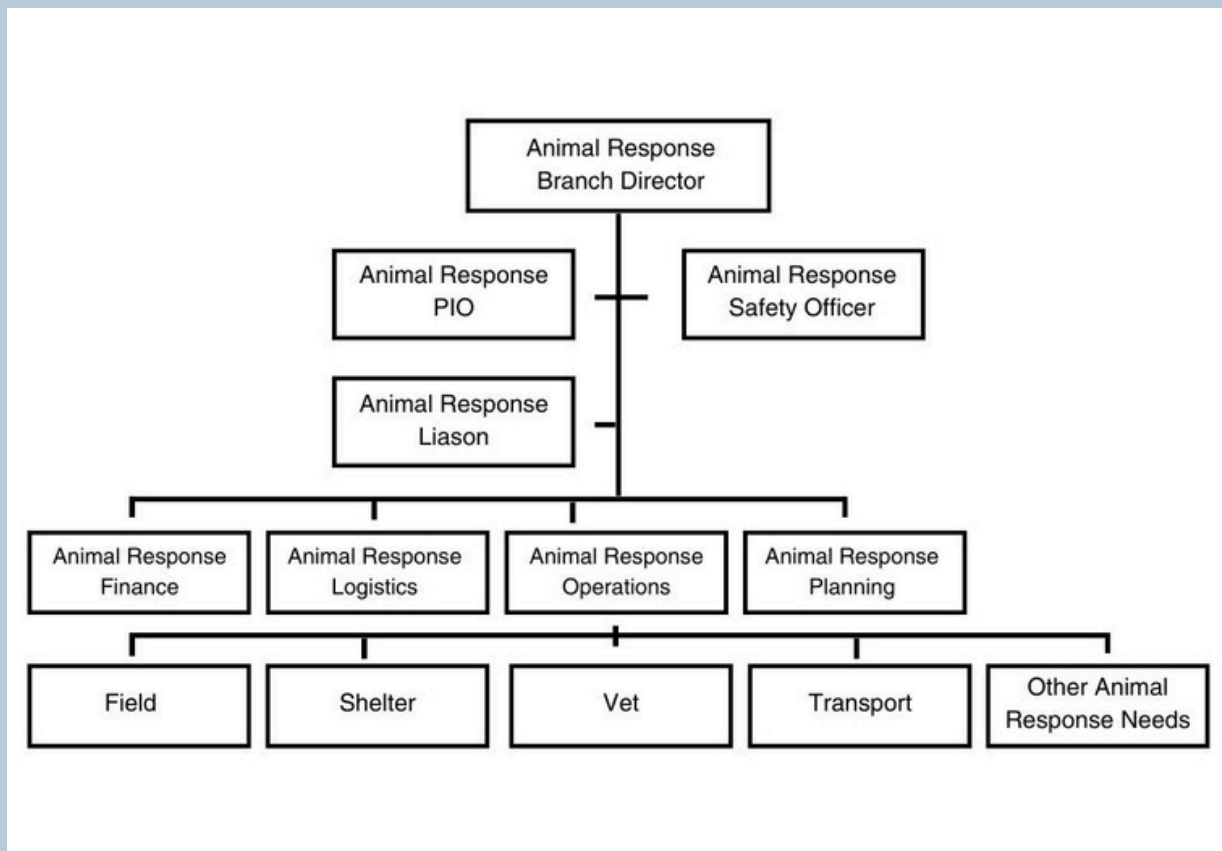
In California, there are currently twenty-four active CARTs. Each CART is formally integrated into the county Emergency Action Plan (EAP). CART members participate in year-round training opportunities and operate as sworn Disaster Service Workers (DSW) under the leadership of the Animal Control Department or Sheriff's office when activated during a disaster or emergency.

In 2018, several CART leads developed an umbrella organization to standardize CART roles, training guidelines, and interoperability after the deadly Camp Fire in Butte County. In 2023, Cal CARTs was formally established as a 501C organization. Cal CARTs works with state agencies and animal stakeholders to improve outcomes for animals in disasters.

How are CARTs organized?

CART leads and volunteers are trained in the Incident Command System (ICS), the universal language of first responders. The organization chart below details the common structure of a CART.

“OVER THE PAST DECADE, WIND-DRIVEN WILDFIRES HAVE SCARRED THE WEST COAST”



MOST ACTIVE CARTS ESTABLISH 501C STATUS OR EXIST UNDER A FISCAL SPONSORSHIP AGREEMENT WITH AN ESTABLISHED ANIMAL ORGANIZATION.

How are CART members trained?

Most CARTs host annual new and returning volunteer training programs which mirror typical Search and Rescue volunteer training programs, with different training objectives and requirements.

CART Volunteers are required to comply with their local county training requirements, which vary. Some include FEMA Incident Command training, which can be obtained online.

In addition, an annual training program delivered by subject matter experts provide skills for the various areas of operation of the CART, which can include:

- Companion Animal Sheltering
- Large Animal Sheltering
- Evacuation and Transport (requires hauling certification)
- Shelter in Place for animals in evacuation zones (requires approved Fireline and all hazards training and PPE)
- Hotline Operation (fielding calls for service and ticketing calls for field teams)
- Radio Communications (all field teams include a trained radio operator)
- Animal Department Operations Center (ADOC) (position integrated with the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and hosts animal branch director, including their leadership team, radio net and dispatching and tracking of field teams)
- Volunteer Management
- Community Outreach

How are CARTs funded?

Most active CARTs establish 501C status or exist under a fiscal sponsorship agreement with an established animal organization. Initial operating budgets are often met through local donations and grants. Startup costs can be approximately \$30-50,000 dollars annually. Operating budgets expand as key administrative needs are met. Initial equipment grants to cover sheltering supplies (including livestock panels), evacuation rigs, personal protective equipment, and radios can range from \$100K-\$400k depending on the number of animals in the community and identified gaps in the response plan. National animal organizations recognize the value of CARTs and offer granting opportunities to cover such expenses. Funding a grant writer to assist CART development is a wise investment.



How does a CART bolster community preparedness?

The greatest impact a CART can have is through community outreach. A common saying amongst CART members is “We will save more animals through education than evacuation”. CARTs can host robust social media campaigns to educate pet owners on all aspects of preparedness, evacuation and recovery. They can attend community events to augment awareness, distribute evacuation kits to community members, assist development of evacuation plans to senior and at-risk communities, participate in county outreach plans and website content. Significant messages to local community members can include Red Flag Day Routines - essentially spooling up readiness and recommending practice of loading, crating, and transport of animals. This helps the animals to be ready, possibly accommodating to the conditions of evacuation. Essentially, when CARTs are not responding to disasters or emergencies, they spend their time training their volunteers and educating the community about preparedness and awareness.

During an incident, the CART can help disseminate accurate information to the EOC and to the community, updating shelter capacity while mirroring county messaging. CARTs work with local veterinarians to plan for medical emergencies and they track response data to assist reporting of numbers of animals sheltered. CARTs initiate reunification efforts at the outset of the incident and they work with the county to host central databases for lost and unclaimed animals.



“ WE WILL SAVE MORE ANIMALS THROUGH EDUCATION THAN EVACUATION

“ *NOW IS THE TIME. IT’S NOT A MATTER OF IF, BUT WHEN A DISASTER STRIKES IN YOUR AREA.* ”

How do I start a CART?

The first step is to review the county emergency action plan for the animal component and contact the county agency or representative in charge of the plan. Talk to a regional CART lead or their county liaison to understand how their integration works. Most CARTs will readily share their training programs, standard operating guidelines, procedures, forms and more. The Cal CARTs website lists and hyperlinks the active CARTs in the state.



When do I start a CART?

Now is the time. It’s not a matter of if, but when a disaster strikes in your area. Anyone who has experienced a disaster will tell you that they never thought it would happen to them. Having a pre-designated plan with associated community awareness can make a world of difference. The power of the human-animal bond is tremendous and those relationships can significantly enhance community resilience for the recovery phase of the disaster. Time and time again, when those who have lost everything are reunified with their animals, they find the hope necessary to carry on. Saving animals lives has been proven to save human lives. And CARTs are here to help ensure the support needed.



SUWANNA RANCH OFFERS NEW LEASE ON LIFE FOR SEIZED FARM ANIMALS

"I'm writing in regard to a cruelty case I'm on right now and I'm feeling pretty good about placements except for BUNNIES!!" wrote the director of Higher Ground Animal Sanctuary in Mead, Washington, in an email this week to the Humane Farming Association's Suwanna Ranch. "There are twenty bunnies from a cruelty case and I was hoping you might have some ideas," she continued. "Bunny rescues are full."

That was just one of the many requests Suwanna Ranch receives each year to provide lifetime care and shelter to farm animals seized in cruelty and neglect cases. Likewise, in another request this week, this one from Riverside County Department of Animal Services, more than one hundred neglected animals – including dogs, horses, birds, and even pet cockroaches – were rescued from a home in southern California. Also included in the seizure were farm animals – pigs, goats, chickens, and a bonded mini-horse and sheep pair.

Following yet another recent seizure conducted by animal control officers -- this one at a hoarding situation in which almost two hundred dogs, rabbits, goats, chickens, and geese were confined in atrocious conditions – Suwanna Ranch was able to provide permanent placement for all twenty-two rabbits and fifty-nine goats.

It is in these and similar cases that Suwanna Ranch, the Humane Farming Association's farm animal refuge located in northern California, steps in to help. Suwanna Ranch provides hands-on emergency care and permanent placement for farm animals seized in cruelty cases throughout the country. The nation's largest farm animal refuge, Suwanna Ranch provides over 7,000 acres of land for rescued victims of animal cruelty and neglect.



“ *THE NATION'S LARGEST FARM ANIMAL REFUGE, SUWANNA RANCH PROVIDES OVER 7,000 ACRES OF LAND FOR RESCUED VICTIMS OF ANIMAL CRUELTY AND NEGLECT.*



Each animal arrives at Suwanna Ranch with his or her own tragic story – among the earliest residents were more than seven hundred rescued emus whom frustrated investors in Texas and California had attempted to beat to death with baseball bats and starve to death, sixty goats who were seized in an animal collecting case, and a former 4-H steer who was stabbed and severely beaten by juvenile delinquents, to name just a few. The animals' stories all have happy endings, as victims of cruelty and neglect find kindness at Suwanna Ranch unlike anything they have ever experienced.

At any given time, about one thousand animals – including cows, sheep, pigs, chickens, turkeys, goats, burros, llamas, and emus who have come to us from all corners of the United States – permanently reside at Suwanna Ranch. The facility also provides temporary shelter for farm animals in need of sanctuary during fires and other emergencies.

“For nearly thirty years, we have been able to maintain our policy of never turning away a farm animal who has been involved in a cruelty case, who has been referred to us by a humane society, animal control department, police department, fire department, or county sheriff's office,” explains HFA National Director Bradley Miller. “HFA provides farm animals who have endured prosecutable cruelty with a caring home for life in a natural environment.”

Suwanna Ranch offers lifetime care and shelter for any and all farm animals seized in animal cruelty and neglect cases throughout the country. The fact that Suwanna Ranch stands ready to provide permanent care should relieve animal control officers of concerns as to whether it is practical to seize farm animals or where to place them once seized.



FROM GERMANY TO GLOBAL RESCUES: A FAMILY'S MISSION TO SAVE ANIMALS IN CRISIS

Submitted by: Christina Sehr

For nearly 20 years, Michael Sehr has dedicated his life to animal control and rescue — a passion shared by his wife, who joined him in the mission a decade ago. Together, they've built an animal control service in Germany that fights tirelessly against animal abuse and neglect, often navigating frustrating bureaucratic barriers along the way. But their commitment to animals knows no borders.

During a recent international deployment following the devastating earthquake in Turkey, Michael and his team made headlines with a heart-stirring rescue. In a crumbling building, a terrified Kangal mother dog and her six puppies were trapped, too scared to flee as the structure threatened to collapse entirely. With no time to spare, Michael carefully carried the mother to safety while his team swiftly followed, cradling her puppies to reunite the family outside. Local animal welfare partners took over the care of the dogs, giving them a second chance at life.

“ I USE MY KNOWLEDGE TO PROTECT ANIMALS FROM SUFFERING – WITH RESPECT, PROFESSIONALISM, AND A HEART IN THE RIGHT PLACE.



Over the course of two weeks in Turkey, Michael and fellow rescuers saved approximately 520 animals — and even three human lives — amid the chaos of the aftermath. The mission was deeply emotional, especially as Michael narrowly escaped another earthquake just before returning home safely.

With international experience in Serbia, Ukraine, Australia, Italy, Greece, and Romania, Michael continues to work toward expanding the Animal Control Network globally. Inspired by the strong community of American animal control officers, he and his wife hope to see greater collaboration and integration in Germany and beyond.



PHOTO CAPTION: SEDATION AND SAFE CAPTURE OF A CAPUCHIN MONKEY USING A BLOWPIPE - THE ANIMAL HAD ESCAPED FROM ILLEGAL PRIVATE KEEPING.



PAWS FOR A CHANGE

BY NACA

SOURCE: BROOKS ANIMAL LAW DIGEST

Animal Organizations File Cruelty Complaint Requesting Investigation into Mass Killing of Turkeys

Animal Partisan and the Animal Legal Defense Fund filed a cruelty complaint in the Eighth Judicial District Court in Meeker County, Minnesota. The complaint uses a novel procedure under Minnesota state law to request the issuance of a search warrant and investigation into Jennie-O Turkey for its killing of over 50,000 turkeys using ventilation shutdown plus heat in October 2023 as part of a depopulation effort in response to an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza.

Georgia Court Sentences Man to 475 Years in Prison for Dog Fighting and Animal Cruelty

On January 30, 2025, Vincent Lemark Burrell was sentenced by the Paulding County Superior Court in Georgia to 475 years in prison for 93 counts of dog fighting and 10 counts of cruelty to animals.

Kentucky Senate Adopts Resolution Urging End to “Wasteful” Animal Testing at Universities

The Kentucky Senate adopted by voice vote Senate Resolution 164, which urges “Kentucky’s colleges and universities that participate in animal research and testing to end the use of animals in wasteful government experiments” and to disclose detailed information regarding their use of animals in research.



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CALIFORNIA ANIMAL ADVOCATES GATHER IN SACRAMENTO FOR VOICES FOR ANIMALS DAY - ASPCA

“NACA BELIEVES ANIMAL ADVOCACY IS A COMMITMENT TO SPEAK FOR THOSE WHO CAN’T AND CREATE A COMPASSIONATE WORLD WHERE EVERY LIVING BEING IS TREATED WITH RESPECT, ACKNOWLEDGING OUR INTERCONNECTEDNESS.

Federal Bill Would Strengthen Protections for Dogs in Commercial Breeding Facilities

H.R. 2253, the “Puppy Protection Act of 2025,” would “amend the Animal Welfare Act to provide for the humane treatment of dogs.” Representative Brian Fitzpatrick introduced the bill along with Representatives Jim McGovern, Guy Reschenthaler, and Jimmy Panetta to provide “stronger federal standards for the treatment of dogs in licensed commercial breeding facilities.”

Montana Finalizes Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks published its final “Montana Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan 2025.” The plan establishes 450 gray wolves as the state’s population benchmark, which would represent around a 60% decrease from the current population if reached, as noted by Defenders of Wildlife. The plan asserts that the 450-wolf benchmark is not the agency’s declared population target.

*INTERNATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS *

Mexico City Bans Use of Violence in Bullfights

In a vote of 61-1, Mexico City policymakers approved a ban on the use of violence against bulls in bullfights. The prohibition prevents the use of weapons to injure bulls and the killing of bulls during fights, and it places time limits on the fights.



THE POWER OF ADVOCACY IN ANIMAL CONTROL & HUMANE LAW

“THE ROLE OF ACOS AND HLEOS IS EVOLVING, AND ADVOCACY IS PLAYING AN INCREASINGLY SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN SHAPING THEIR WORK

Written by Julianna Tetlow, Government Relations Director, San Diego Humane Society

Animal control officers (ACOs) and Humane Law Enforcement Officers (HLEOs) are the unsung heroes of animal welfare; enforcing laws, rescuing animals, and educating the public about responsible pet ownership. While their work is often focused on immediate response and enforcement, advocacy is a crucial component in improving the effectiveness of animal control policies, ensuring humane treatment of animals, and fostering stronger relationships with the communities they serve.

Why Advocacy Matters

Advocacy helps shape laws and policies that directly impact animal control operations and animal welfare. ACOs and HLEOs are in a unique position to provide firsthand insight into issues such as pet overpopulation, dangerous animals, animal neglect, and the importance of spay/neuter programs.

By engaging in advocacy, ACOs and HLEOs can help influence:

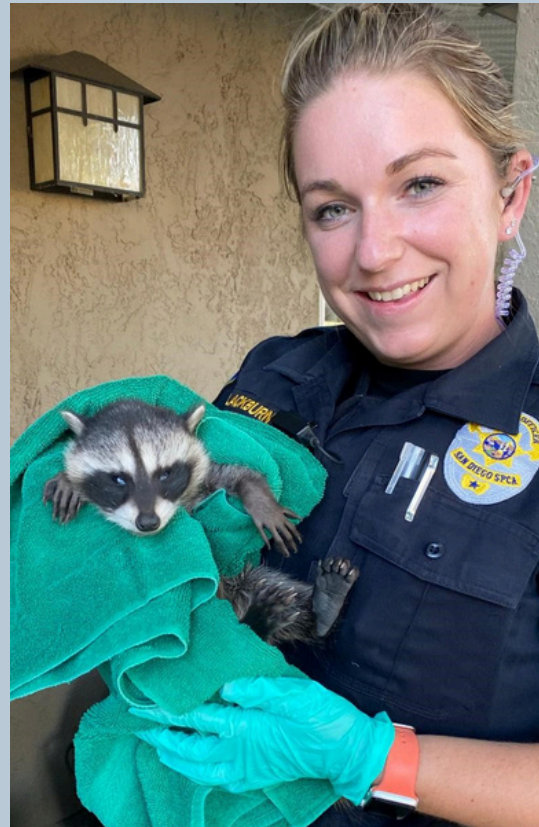
- **Stronger Animal Protection Laws-** – ACOs and HLEOs investigate cases of abuse and neglect that could be prevented with more robust legal protections or more impactful penalties.
- **Increased Resources for Animal Control-** State or local funding for shelters, training, and community outreach programs can improve effectiveness in the field and shelter.
- **Public Awareness and Community Engagement** – Educating the public on responsible pet ownership can reduce animal-related issues in communities



“ *STATE OR LOCAL FUNDING FOR SHELTERS, TRAINING, AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAMS CAN IMPROVE EFFECTIVENESS IN THE FIELD AND SHELTER.*

Ways ACOs and HLEOs Can Advocate Effectively

- Collaborate with Local Legislators – ACOs and HLEOs should work with city councils, county officials, and state legislators to advocate for stronger animal welfare laws. By sharing real-life cases and statistics, they can highlight the need for legal changes.
- Engage with Community Organizations – Partnering with animal shelters, rescue groups, and public safety organizations can help build a support network for stronger enforcement and education efforts.
- Educate the Public – Hosting community events, school presentations, and social media campaigns can increase public awareness about animal welfare laws and best practices for pet ownership.
- Join Professional Associations – Being part of organizations like the National Animal Care & Control Association (NACA) can provide ACOs and HLEOs with resources, advocacy training, and networking opportunities to push for broader policy changes.
- Report and Document Issues – Keeping thorough records of recurring animal welfare concerns in their jurisdiction can help build a case for necessary legislative changes or funding increases.



The Future of Animal Control Advocacy

The role of ACOs and HLEOs is evolving, and advocacy is playing an increasingly significant role in shaping their work. As communities recognize the value of humane, proactive animal control, ACOs and HLEOs must be at the forefront of these discussions, ensuring that policies are both effective and compassionate.

By embracing advocacy, animal control officers and Humane Law Enforcement Officers not only improve conditions for the animals they protect but also enhance public safety, increase community support, and strengthen the overall impact of their profession. Now more than ever, their voices are essential in shaping a more humane future for animals and communities alike.



Maddie's Fund

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MADDIE'S FUND®, #THANKSTOMADDIE.

RETHINKING CONFERENCES: NACA'S DIRECT-TO- STATE MODEL

By NACA

For decades, professional development in the animal care and control field followed a familiar path: attend a large national conference, hope the content applies to your day-to-day challenges, and find a way to justify the cost and time away from your community. While national conferences have long offered valuable opportunities for learning and networking, the reality is that many officers, especially those from smaller or under-resourced agencies, face significant barriers to access.

At the National Animal Care & Control Association (NACA), we asked ourselves a critical question:

What if we brought the training and support to them?

The answer became clear. We didn't just need to improve access—we needed to flip the model entirely.



NACA'S NEW APPROACH



"The NACA presentation at our state conference was exactly what we needed—relevant, real, and energizing. It's clear they understand the challenges we're facing, and they're not just talking about change—they're helping us make it happen." - Conference Attendee

Meeting Professionals Where They Are

In 2023, NACA began piloting a new approach: instead of waiting for professionals to come to us, we committed to going to them. Thanks to the generous support of Maddie's Fund, we're now investing directly in state-level efforts—bringing NACA's expertise, resources, and training into the heart of local conferences, communities, and regional events.

In 2025 alone, we're planning to visit over 30 states, offering a wide range of support, including:

- Keynote presentations and sessions on current, relevant topics
- On-the-ground training that aligns with state-specific needs
- Scholarships to eliminate financial barriers for attendees
- Conference sponsorships to support state associations in delivering high-quality programming
- Tabling and direct networking with officers and stakeholders



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This model is designed not only to increase access but to enhance impact. By being present in state settings, we gain deeper insights into regional challenges and can tailor our support accordingly.

Why It Matters

This shift has already begun to transform how members see and experience NACA.

Officers aren't just seeing us at the national level—they're seeing us in their space, talking about their realities, and offering solutions that make sense for their communities.

"We realized our members didn't need more hurdles—they needed more help," says Jerrica Owen, NACA Executive Director. "So we made a bold shift to meet them where they are."



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“THIS MODEL HAS DEEPENED OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FIELD

“The NACA presentation at our state conference was exactly what we needed—relevant, real, and energizing. It's clear they understand the challenges we're facing, and they're not just talking about change—they're helping us make it happen.” - Conference Attendee

More Than Just Showing Up

This new approach is rooted in intentionality. We're leveraging a nationwide network of board members, instructors, and staff to minimize travel costs and environmental impact. We're choosing proximity and practicality over unnecessary expense. And we're doing it all with one goal in mind: making sure every dollar and every minute makes a meaningful difference.

"This model has deepened our relationship with the field," Owen adds. "When we show up locally, officers see that NACA is truly here for them—not just in words, but in action."

Looking Ahead

As we continue to flip the model and scale our outreach, we're also helping build capacity at the state level. Our presence helps empower state associations, elevate conference content, and reinforce the idea that professional development should be accessible, relevant, and responsive.

This isn't about replacing national conferences—it's about complementing them with targeted, local impact that supports the boots-on-the-ground professionals who are often overlooked in larger systems.

We're excited about what this model means for the future of animal care and control. And we're even more excited to be doing it alongside the professionals who are making a difference every day—in every state, city, and community we visit.



“NONE OF THIS WOULD BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF MADDIE’S FUND. THEIR BELIEF IN OUR VISION TO BRING TRAINING AND RESOURCES DIRECTLY TO THE STATES HAS TRANSFORMED WHAT WE’RE ABLE TO DO. THEY DIDN’T JUST FUND A PROGRAM—THEY INVESTED IN THE FUTURE OF OUR PROFESSION, AND WE’RE INCREDIBLY GRATEFUL FOR THEIR PARTNERSHIP.”
—JERRICA OWEN, CAWA | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NACA

NACA WELCOMES 4 NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Welcoming new board members isn't just about filling seats—it's about shaping the future of animal care and control. At NACA, we're intentional about the leaders we invite to the table. Each board position is an opportunity to bring in fresh perspectives, diverse experiences, and specific expertise that strengthen our ability to serve the profession as a whole. We actively seek candidates who help fill strategic gaps—whether geographic, operational, or skill-based—so our leadership reflects the wide range of communities we support. Serving on the NACA Board is a prestigious honor and a powerful responsibility. It represents a national platform to influence best practices, elevate the profession, and advocate for the needs of officers and agencies across the country. With each new member, our board becomes more dynamic, more inclusive, and better equipped to lead.

Chris Lutgen is the Senior Animal Control Officer for the Lake Havasu City Police Department and Vice President of the Arizona Animal Control Association. With 14 years in the field, Chris has grown his agency's animal control unit through strong leadership, professionalism, and advocacy. He is passionate about helping agencies nationwide gain recognition and support within their communities and departments.

"When leadership sees our value, the possibilities for animal control are limitless."



Dr. Christina Avila

Animal control supervisor
City of Perris, CA



Chris Lutgen

Senior Animal Control Officer,
Lake Havasu City Police Dept.

Dr. Christina Avila is a seasoned animal care professional with over 22 years of experience in veterinary technology and animal control. Currently leading a city department serving 80,000 residents, she's implemented community-focused initiatives such as a return-to-home shelter model, a community cat program, and free microchipping. With a Doctorate in Business Administration, she brings strategic leadership to the field and is committed to advancing animal welfare through collaboration, innovation, and education.

"Every animal deserves dignity, and every community deserves compassionate, effective animal services."

NACA WELCOMES 4 NEW BOARD MEMBERS

As part of our commitment to increasing the professionalism and leadership of our association, we are thrilled to introduce our board candidates! These individuals bring diverse skills and a passion for advancing our mission. Your vote is crucial in shaping the future of our organization. Take a moment to learn about each candidate, and remember to cast your vote to ensure your voice is heard in this important election. Your participation is essential to continuing our journey towards excellence and growth!



Sarah Hock

Executive Director at Joint
Animal Services, WA

Sarah Hock is the Executive Director of Joint Animal Services in Olympia, WA, with over two decades of experience in animal welfare leadership, including municipal services, capital campaigns, and low-cost veterinary programs. A champion for field professionals, she works to elevate industry standards, support staff well-being, and position animal control as an essential public service.

"To truly serve animals, we must also serve and support the professionals who care for them."

Angela Miedema is the Director of Volusia County Animal Services, bringing over 15 years of leadership in enforcement, animal behavior, and shelter operations. Her innovative work includes mobile veterinary services, advanced officer training, and digital outreach strategies to build community trust and reduce pet overpopulation. Angela's unique blend of law enforcement and marketing expertise drives her mission to raise professional standards across the field.

"Professional animal control saves lives—not just animal lives, but public safety, too."



Angela Miedema

Director of Animal Services,
County of Volusia, FL

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STANDING UNITED IN CRISIS

HOW A.S.I.S.T. IS TRANSFORMING DISASTER RESPONSE FOR ANIMALS AND COMMUNITIES



WHEN DISASTERS STRIKE, THEY DON'T DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN HUMAN OR ANIMAL LIVES. FLOODWATERS RISE, WILDFIRES SPREAD, AND HURRICANES TEAR THROUGH COMMUNITIES — LEAVING BOTH PEOPLE AND ANIMALS IN DESPERATE NEED OF RESCUE AND CARE. IN THESE MOMENTS OF CHAOS, THE ANIMAL SERVICES INCIDENT SUPPORT TEAM (A.S.I.S.T.) IS THERE TO ANSWER THE CALL, ENSURING NO COMMUNITY, NO AGENCY, AND NO ANIMAL FACES A CRISIS ALONE.

A.S.I.S.T. is more than a program; it is a lifeline. Born from a powerful collaboration between ASAR Training and the National Animal Care and Control Association (NACA), this initiative is set to reshape the landscape of emergency response by fully integrating animal services into broader disaster management operations.

A Mission Rooted in Compassion and Action - At its core, A.S.I.S.T. is dedicated to empowering Animal Control Units with the tools, training, and on-the-ground support needed to respond confidently in times of disaster. The mission is clear: to deliver professional assistance before, during, and after crises — bridging gaps that too often leave animal services out of the emergency response conversation.

“ *WHEN DISASTER STRIKES, WE STAND UNITED — NO AGENCY, NO COMMUNITY, AND NO ANIMAL FACES IT ALONE.* ”

Through expert guidance and seamless coordination, A.S.I.S.T. teams will work side by side with emergency management officials, animal welfare agencies, and volunteers to ensure animals are not forgotten amid the urgency of disaster response. From evacuations to shelter management and recovery efforts, they are the quiet force behind keeping families — both two-legged and four-legged — together.



What sets **A.S.I.S.T.** apart is its holistic approach. The team doesn't just respond to disasters; they prepare communities to weather them long before the storm clouds gather. Their services span the full spectrum of emergency management, including:

- **Disaster Planning & Preparedness** - Risk assessments, tailored Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), targeted training exercises, and critical resource identification all ensure that Animal Control Units are ready when disaster strikes.
- **Expert Consultation & Technical Assistance** - With FEMA resource-typed technicians and subject matter experts in animal search and rescue, A.S.I.S.T. provides invaluable insights and operational guidance throughout a crisis.



- **Collaboration & Networking** - By building lasting partnerships and participating in regional exercises, A.S.I.S.T. fosters a culture of preparedness that strengthens community resilience.
- **Incident Coordination & Response Support** - Whether in the field or at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), the team integrates seamlessly with the Incident Command System (ICS), manages volunteer coordination, and assists with public information and communications.
- **Post-Disaster Recovery & Evaluation** - Long after the initial emergency passes, A.S.I.S.T. remains engaged. They support recovery operations, help agencies conduct after-action evaluations, and promote the mental well-being of responders and communities alike.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of A.S.I.S.T. is the commitment to inclusivity. Recognizing that every community — regardless of size or resources — deserves access to expert support, A.S.I.S.T. provides its services free of charge. It's a testament to their belief that protecting animals in disasters is not a luxury; it is a necessity.

The motto says it best: "When disaster strikes, we stand united — no agency, no community, and no animal faces it alone." This philosophy drives every operation and every rescue, underscoring their belief in the power of collaboration and compassion.

As climate change accelerates the frequency and intensity of natural disasters, programs like A.S.I.S.T. are more critical than ever. They represent a future where animal services are not an afterthought but an integral part of emergency management. Through proactive training, real-time response, and unwavering post-disaster support, A.S.I.S.T. is setting a new standard for what compassionate, community-centered disaster response looks like.

For communities and animal control agencies looking to strengthen their disaster readiness, A.S.I.S.T. stands ready to help. Because when we prepare together, respond together, and recover together, we ensure that no family member — human or animal — is left behind.

To learn more about A.S.I.S.T., please visit asartraining.com/asist.

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JOIN NACA TODAY AND NEVER MISS AN ISSUE!

Thank you for your dedication and tireless efforts in safeguarding our communities and advocating for animal welfare. Your commitment to protecting both humans and animals is truly commendable.

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*Empowering animal care & control professionals &
enriching lives, one issue at a time!*

