

This practice poses the risk of introducing canine-transmitted rabies to areas where it does not currently exist. The movement of dogs for the purposes of adoption or sales from areas with dog-to-dog rabies transmission should be prohibited.

Rabies Control during a Disaster Response

Animals might be displaced during and after man-made or natural disasters and require emergency sheltering. Animal rabies vaccination and exposure histories often are not available for displaced animals. Disaster response creates situations where animal caretakers might lack appropriate training and pre-exposure vaccination. In such situations, it is critical to implement and coordinate rabies-prevention and –control measures to reduce the risk of rabies transmission and the need for human post-exposure prophylaxis. Such measures include:

1. Coordinate relief efforts of individuals and organizations with the local emergency operations center before deployment.
2. Adopt minimum standards for animal caretakers that include personal protective equipment, previous rabies vaccination, and appropriate training in animal handling.
3. Examine each animal at a triage site for signs of rabies.
4. Isolate animals exhibiting signs of rabies, pending evaluation by a veterinarian.
5. Ensure that all animals have a unique identifier.
6. Administer a rabies vaccination to all dogs, cats, and ferrets unless reliable proof of vaccination exists. This is especially important for dogs and cats housed in group settings. Personnel should be aware that rabies vaccines may take as long as 28 days to become effective.
7. Maintain documentation of animal disposition and location (i.e., returned to owner, died or euthanized, adopted, relocated to another shelter and address of new location).
8. Provide facilities to confine and observe animals involved in exposures.
9. Report human exposures to appropriate public health authorities

For more information on information on animal shelters in times of disaster, consult the CDC's Interim Guidelines for Animal Health and Control of Disease Transmission in Pet Shelters (<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/animalhealthguidelines.asp>).

Alabama's primary agency in times of disaster for animal health is the Department of Agriculture and Industry, lead by the State Veterinarian and the Alabama State Agriculture Response Team (SART). For more information about Alabama's animal health disaster plans and protocols, consult Alabama's SART's website (<http://www.alsart.org>).