

COMPANION ANIMAL AND OWNER REUNIFICATION PROTOCOLS

Reunification protocols for people reclaiming their animals following a disaster will benefit greatly by the establishment and implementation of orderly intake procedures. These procedures should include the following components:

- An intake form detailing the animal's physical description, and health and vaccination status.
- A release agreement specifying the terms of care being provided for the animal while in the temporary shelter, the length of time the animal will be held, and means of tracking and contacting the owner or agent of the animal.
- An identification process of applying an identification band or collar to the animal and/or its carrier and photographing the animal, preferably with its owner. The practice of microchipping for permanent identification should be encouraged and utilized whenever possible.
- A system of tracking the animal during its stay in the emergency shelter should be established.
- Copies of the intake form and release agreement should be given to the owner or agent and required to be presented at time of reclaim.
- The holding period for stray animals brought into a temporary shelter during a disaster should be extended well beyond the holding period required by the State under normal conditions, not less than 14 days. These animals may need to be transferred to a permanent facility or into foster care when the temporary shelter is closed.
- No animal should be euthanized following a disaster without the expressed directive of a licensed veterinarian.
- An album of photographs of deceased or euthanized animals should be maintained for discreet viewing by persons looking for lost animals.
- Persons looking for lost animals should not be allowed to observe the stray animals without first filling out a detailed lost animal report.
- Owner released animals not reclaimed during the holding period specified in the release agreement shall be considered abandoned and may be placed for adoption.
- An alternate process for proving ownership should be developed for those instances when forms may have been lost during a disaster.

