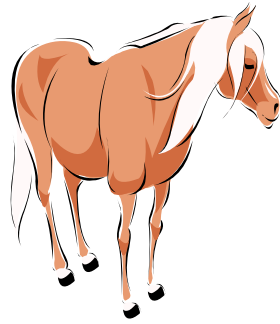


# Emergency Pet Shelter Manual



## Big Bend Disaster Animal Response Team

Tallahassee, FL

# *Big Bend DART Emergency Pet Sheltering Manual*

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## **I. Introduction**

Emergency pet sheltering, also referred to as pet-accessible shelters, is designed to meet the needs of people and their animals during emergencies and disasters. Animal owners are responsible for their animals, and should have a disaster plan prepared for their animals in case of evacuations or emergencies. Still, there will sometimes be situations where emergency animal sheltering is needed such as rapid-onset disasters, massive evacuations where hotels and boarders/vet clinics are full, and evacuees who bring their pets with them.

### **Purpose**

To provide temporary shelter for pets and livestock during emergencies or disasters, including safe housing, food and water.

### **Locating emergency animal shelters**

Emergency pet shelter locations will be those designated by either the American Red Cross (ARC) or the County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) as meeting the safety standards for humans and/or animals.

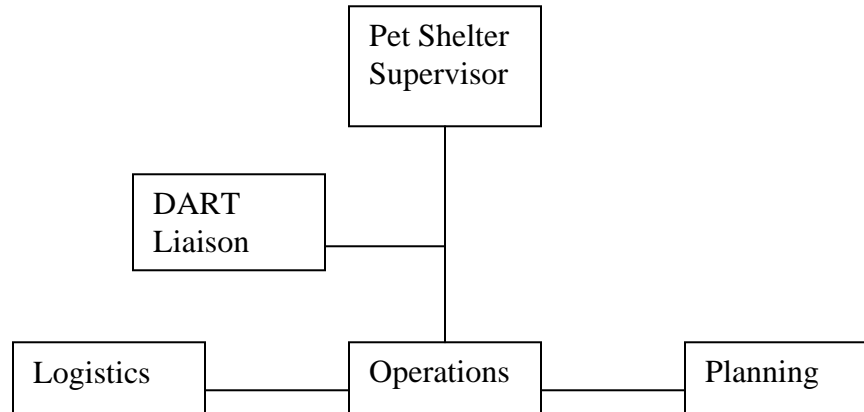
- (1) If the DART team is operating under the auspices of the ARC, the ARC has sole discretion for determining the need for an emergency pet shelter as well as designating an ARC shelter as a pet-accessible shelter.
- (2) If the DART team is working directly for the EOC, the EOC will determine the location of the emergency pet shelter.

### **Allowable animals**

- (1) Companion animals. Licensed companion animals such as seeing eye dogs are generally allowed to stay in Red Cross and County shelters with their owner.
- (2) Domestic pets. Includes dogs, cats, birds, ferrets, small mammals (gerbils, hamsters, guinea pigs, mice, rabbits, potbelly pigs), reptiles, fish, and arachnids.
- (3) Livestock. Large animals such as horses, mules, sheep, pigs, goats, llamas and emus will be housed in separate locations identified and pre-arranged by the DART team.
- (4) Animals not allowed include wild animals, exotics, feral animals, poisonous reptiles, and endangered or threatened species.

## **II. Organizational Charts and Responsibilities**

### **Organizational chart for Command**



### **Command responsibilities**

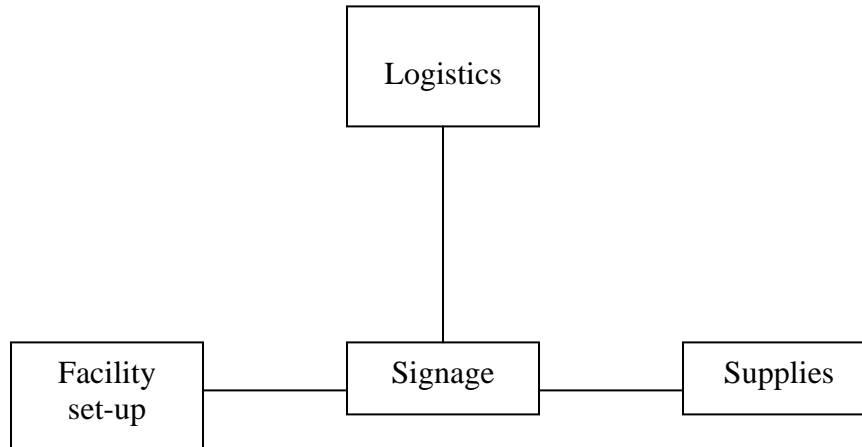
- Responsible for overall management of pet accessible shelter
- Initiate set-up of shelter operations
- Supervision of DART staff and volunteers
- Coordination with ARC Shelter Manager(s) and DART liaison
- Maintaining incident log
- Close out of shelter operations
- Submission of pet shelter report to Incident Commander

### **DART Liaison responsibilities**

- Coordinate with Red Cross or EOC
- Notify DART team and volunteers of activation
- Contact volunteers and schedule staffing
- Coordinate with other agencies (humane societies, rescue groups, Animal Control, vets, boarders, groomers)
- Point of Contact for the public
- Maintain log of contacts
- Coordinate procurement/delivery of supplies
- Contact the on-call veterinarian when needed

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### **Organizational Chart for Logistics**

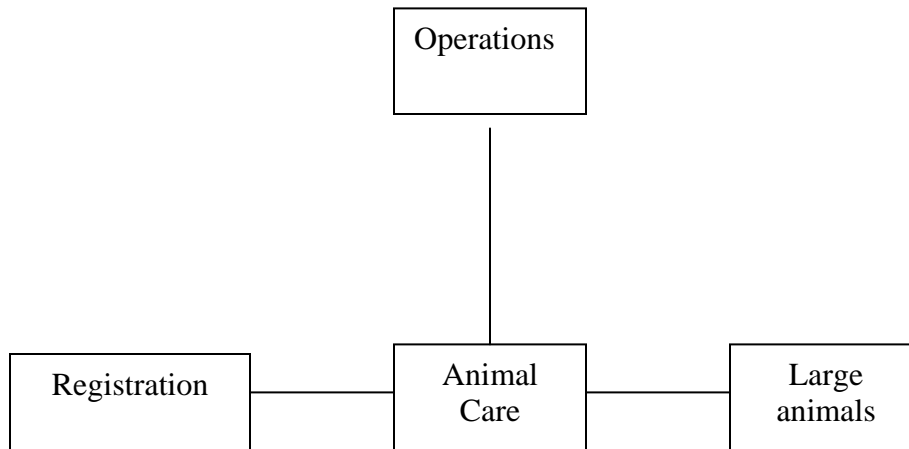


### **Logistics Responsibilities**

- Set up signage and registration area at designated pet shelter
- Inventory facility space and note present conditions
- Configure pet shelter space (dogs, cats, isolation wards, materials)
- Set up trash cans, fans, plastic sheeting, crates and supplies
- Ensure adequate supplies of crates, food, plastic bags, disinfectant, etc.
- Coordinate with DART liaison for special supply needs
- Coordinate with ARC Shelter Manager for location of trash disposal, pet walking areas, and needs of DART volunteers
- Break down of shelter, clean-up of area, and final check of area

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### **Organizational Chart for Operations**



### **Operations responsibilities**

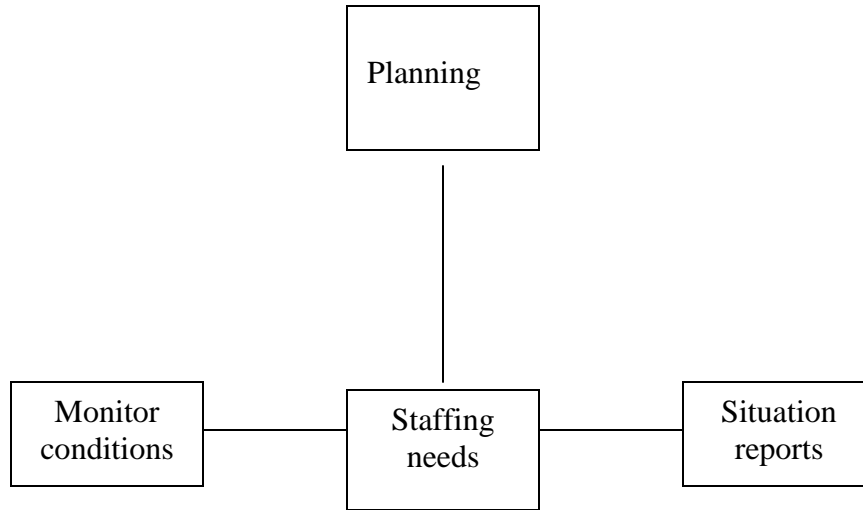
- Register evacuees and their animals using appropriate forms
- Take photo of animal with their owner(s)
- Perform animal intake and health assessment
- Assign animal to crate and properly label crate with owner ID
- Maintain file of all animals currently in shelter
- Assist owners when they come to walk/feed/care for pet
- Notify pet shelter supervisor when owners are not caring for pets on a regular schedule
- Coordinate with veterinarian on-site to deal with pet health care issues
- Walk/feed pets whose owners are housed in another ARC shelter
- Monitor animals for stress/behavior problems
- Monitor supplies, food and environmental conditions
- Assist in break-down and cleaning of shelter and crates

### **Large Animals**

- Direct owners to location of farms/stables for livestock
- Coordinate with logistics to provide livestock feed if needed
- Ensure owners of large animals/livestock are registered at ARC shelter and have completed DART registration and intake forms
- Notify pet shelter supervisor of any problems

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### **Organizational Chart for Planning**



### **Planning responsibilities**

- Work with operations and logistics to keep abreast of staffing needs for upcoming shifts
- Communicate situation reports to DART liaison and pet shelter supervisor to plan for next operational period
- Keep abreast of incident situation and changing conditions
- Coordinate with pet shelter supervisor and DART liaison to plan for the number of DART volunteers needed according to the number of pets in the shelter
- Assist with operations of pet shelter as needed

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## **III. Set-up procedures**

Authority for opening the pet accessible shelter rests with the Red Cross Disaster Services Director or the County ESF-17 Coordinator. That decision will be communicated directly to the DART liaison or the Pet Shelter Supervisor.

### **1. Facility requirements**

Prior to using a facility as a pet accessible shelter, a DART member will physically inspect the site and do an inventory of the current condition of the facility, making note of any damage, equipment, furniture or materials present as well as cleanliness of the site. For use as a pet accessible shelter, the following requirements must be present:

- Operational water and power
- Adequate lighting
- Ingress and egress through all doors, including emergency exits
- Facility security
- Functional restrooms
- Non-carpeted floors

### **2. Registration and Intake area**

The registration area should be located near a strategic entry point easily reached from the “people” shelter but should not be a narrow, cramped space. Entry point should be clearly signed and, if possible, directional signs to pet facility posted along the way. If there are language difficulties with the owner, request an interpreter from the ARC Shelter Manager.

- Provide a table for owner registration and immediately take a photo of the animal with its owner and attach it to the registration form.
- Pet owners must be officially registered at a shelter in order to have their pet in the DART facility. If the shelter with a designated pet shelter is completely filled up, evacuees who are registered at other shelters may register their pet in the DART facility and DART staff will care for it.
- Designate a space for DART members to fill out the animal intake forms and do a health assessment on the animal.
- Assign the animal to an appropriately sized crate or kennel and ensure water, towels or bedding is provided. Immediately label the crate with the owner’s name and the pet’s name and any special needs.



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- If the owner brings their own crate, make sure it is clearly labeled with their name, note that on the intake form, and place the crate in the appropriate area.
- Keep all leashes, collars, food bowls, toys or bedding that the owner provides with the animal, either inside the crate or directly on top of it.

### **3. Volunteer Coordination**

Provide a separate table or area away from the Animal Intake area for volunteer registration. This area should be available for DART volunteers to store personal gear such as coats, bags, DART kits, etc. and should have chairs for volunteers to take rest breaks, eat snacks away from animal areas, and set up cots for night shifts.

- DART volunteers should have a Red Cross ID badge.
- DART volunteers will fill out a registration form.
- DART volunteers will wear a DART t-shirt or vest.
- Volunteers will check in/check out with pet shelter supervisor.
- DART volunteers will have access to shelter-provided snacks, food and water.

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## **IV. Operations**

### **Signage**

- Clearly mark all doors to the area as “DART pet shelter.”
- Clearly mark one door for “Animal Intake.”
- Post DART policies and procedures for pet shelter care and feeding.
- Designate and clearly post a “dog walk” area (flagging is best for this)

### **Animal Areas**

Triage area: Should be near the Registration desk where the Intake form and assessment are completed; animals are ID'd, photographed, examined, and assigned to the appropriate area.

- No animal will be outside its crate/kennel without a leash and identification tag. Only designated DART volunteers or animal owners will be allowed to remove any animal from its crate/kennel.
- Species should be separated (dogs/cats/birds) as well as those animals with special needs, are sick or under stress, or are aggressive.

### **DOGS**

- If space permits, crates or kennels should be 12” or more apart.
- Crates should be oriented to keep animals facing away from each other.
- Provide food and water bowls, ID tag, leash, and bedding for each crate.
- For dogs sensitive to noise, activity or other dogs, provide a sheet to keep the sides of the crate covered.
- The dog area should be close to an exit door to facilitate reaching dog walk areas; provide all owners with plastic bags for clean-up each time they walk their dog.
- If necessary because of weather or dangerous conditions, a dog walk area can be created indoors in a separate room. Assign a DART volunteer specifically for maintaining this area.

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- Provide separate areas for dogs that are sick and for those without proof of vaccination.
- Dogs that are seriously ill or pose a health risk to others should be transported to a local vet. Contact the on-call DART veterinarian for assistance.
- Aggressive animals must be securely contained. The owner will be responsible for care and feeding of an aggressive animal. If the owner does not have a muzzle, provide one for the duration of the stay in the shelter.
- DART staff may refuse admittance to any animal that appears uncontrollable or dangerously aggressive.
- Isolate dogs that are in heat.

### **CATS**

- Cats should be kept in a separate area from dogs, in the quietest part of the area away from doors and other activity.
- Cats that are sick or without proof of vaccination should be kept separate.
- Provide food and water bowls, ID tag, and bedding for each crate.
- Provide kitty litter boxes in an area where owners can take their cats out of the crates for exercise and/or feeding, or provide a litter box inside the crate. Litter boxes should be cleaned (scooped) regularly.
- Isolate cats that are in heat.

### **BIRDS**

- Designate an area for birds away from drafts and temperature extremes.
- All birds must be in cages, fully ventilated. Provide food, water, ID tag, and newspaper for all cages.
- Contact a DART member with bird expertise or a member of the Tri-State Avian Society to assess the bird and the bird area location.
- Cages may accommodate up to three birds if the birds are socialized, free of disease, and ample mobility is allowed for each.
- Provide a sheet to cover the birdcage to deter noise, and cover at night.

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### **FERRETS**

- Ferrets must be current in rabies vaccinations.
- Cages may house up to 3 ferrets if they are socialized, free of disease, and ample mobility is allowed for each.
- Provide food, water, ID tag, and bedding for each cage.
- Cages must be of sturdy construction, chew-proof, and deep enough to allow for appropriate bedding.
- Change bedding regularly and dispose of it in a sealed plastic bag.

### **SMALL MAMMALS**

- All small mammals are to be kept caged at all times.
- Provide food, water, ID tag, and bedding for each cage.
- Cages must provide ample mobility and be well ventilated.
- Cages or containers must be chew-proof.
- Provide odor-inhibiting bedding material such as wood chips or shredded paper.
- Change bedding regularly and dispose of it in a sealed plastic bag.

### **REPTILES**

- Reptiles should be kept in a separate area from other animals.
- Locate reptile area near electrical outlets for portable heaters.
- Reptile cages should be cleaned daily to prevent risk of salmonella.
- Provide each cage with food, water, ID tag, and bedding if required.

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### **ARACHNIDS**

- If possible, locate arachnids away from other animals.
- Provide water and ID tag for each cage. Owner will be responsible for feeding and providing any bedding or natural materials (twigs, grass) required.

### **LARGE ANIMALS**

- Horses will be separated according to proof of negative Coggins test, and stallions housed separately from mares and geldings.
- Owners are responsible for transporting large animals. DART staff will assist owners by directing or leading the owner to nearby farms or stable identified for sheltering livestock. Owners must be officially registered as staying at the shelter.
- Farms, stables, or corrals used to house evacuated animals should be out of the immediate disaster area.
- Only DART members that are familiar and experienced in large animal handling will be assigned to these tasks. Animal Intake forms, photographs, and assessments should be conducted before the animal is boarded.
- If weather conditions permit, owners should travel to the farm or location to feed and care for large animals. If not, arrangements will be made for a DART member or farm owner to feed and care for the animal.

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### ***Operations: Policies and procedures governing operation of pet shelter***

- Dart members functioning as DART liaison, Pet Shelter Supervisor, or Operations manager must have completed DART training.
- DART volunteers must be at least 18 years old.
- DART staff will wear identification identifying themselves as such.
- The Pet Shelter Supervisor is in charge of the operation of the pet accessible shelter and has the authority to set shelter-specific rules, approve variances to DART policies, dismiss volunteers, determine staffing levels, and refuse to accept animals.
- Only pet owners and DART staff may remove animals from crates.
- Unless needs dictate, owners are responsible for administering all medications to pets.
- Pets in the emergency pet shelter will not have contact with other pets.
- Owners will be asked to provide proof of vaccinations such as shot records or rabies tag; this will be noted on the registration and intake forms. During disaster or evacuations, it is recognized that pet owners may not always remember to bring proof of rabies vaccination or bordella shots. The registration forms will indicate that the pet owner accepts the risks of boarding their pet in the emergency pet shelter.
- Only DART staff, pet owners, Shelter personnel and building maintenance workers are allowed inside the pet accessible shelter.
- The pet accessible shelter will be locked at night.
- At least two DART staff will be present at all times. When animals are in residence, the facility will never be left unattended.
- The Pet Shelter Supervisor will devise and post an emergency evacuation plan for the pet accessible shelter in case of fire, severe weather, or power failure.
- Pet owners must be officially registered in a Red Cross or county shelter in order to place their pet in the pet accessible shelter. If a shelter facility with a pet accessible shelter is at capacity, evacuees staying in other shelters and officially registered there may register their pet in the pet shelter. The Pet Shelter Supervisor will call the Shelter Manager of the shelter and confirm that the pet owner is actually registered there before accepting the pet.

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- Pet owners will feed, walk, and care for their animals. The exception will be those animals whose owners are staying at other Red Cross or county shelters and cannot travel to visit their animals.
  
- Animals will be fed once a day and walked at least twice a day. Pet owners who do not adhere to the minimum care schedule will be notified through the Shelter Manager that they must care for their animal or leave the shelter. Pet owners who do not perform the minimum care for their animals or allow them to run free in the area will be reported to Animal Control and may result in being asked to leave the shelter.
  
- Each crate or kennel will be cleaned and disinfected before being used for another animal. All food and water bowls will be cleaned and disinfected and new bedding provided for the next resident.
  
- The DART staff will perform regular “poop patrol” walks to ensure pet owners have cleaned up the Dog Walk area.
  
- The DART Shelter Supervisor will immediately inform the Shelter Manager of any problems with the building, security, shelter population, or hazardous situation.
  
- The facility will be left as clean or cleaner than before the pet shelter was set up.
  
- Walk-in volunteers will not be accepted.

## **V. Break-down procedures**

Authority for closing the pet accessible shelter rests with the Red Cross Disaster Services Director or County ESF-17 Coordinator. That decision will be communicated directly to the DART liaison or the Pet Shelter Supervisor. Once the decision has been made to close the shelter, break down can be initiated and may, if necessary, be phased in over time if some animals are still in residence. The Pet Shelter Supervisor may request the DART liaison to call in extra volunteers to assist in break-down if needed. In lieu of this, other Red Cross volunteers may be used if they are available.

- Once owners have checked out all the pets in the pet shelter, all crates, kennels and cages will be broke down and removed from the facility. Cleaning and disinfecting of crates and kennels after breakdown can occur off-site.
- All crates, materials and supplies will be removed from the facility and plastic sheeting will be taken up.

### **Clean up**

- All floors will be cleaned and disinfected. Any furniture, tables or shelves used for holding crates and animals will be wiped down with disinfectant wipes. Handrails, water fountains, and doorknobs will be wiped down with disinfectant wipes.
- Trash receptacles will be emptied and bagged trash placed in designated dumpsters.
- Facility restrooms will be cleaned and the trash emptied.
- The Pet Shelter Supervisor will have the Shelter Manager or the Building Maintenance Supervisor physically inspect the building before leaving, and correct any discrepancies noted.
- Cages, crates and kennels will be cleaned and disinfected before being returned to lenders (typically the Leon County Humane Society, Animal Control, Animal Services Center, and Humane Society of the US). DART crates will be cleaned and disinfected before storing in DART cache.
- All towels, sheets and bedding will be laundered with detergent and bleach after being used for each animal. All towels, sheets and bedding will be laundered before storing in watertight containers in the DART cache.

### **Inventory**

- All DART materials, including forms, supplies, safety equipment, and volunteer t-shirts and vests will be inventoried and returned to the DART cache. Food will be stored in watertight containers.



## **VI. Incident Close out**

### **Report writing**

The Pet Shelter Supervisor will submit a report to the Incident Commander, whether it is the American Red Cross Disaster Services Director or the County ESF-17 Coordinator. This report will be based on the incident log kept at the pet accessible shelter and the log kept by the DART liaison in the EOC. It will include the number and types of animals housed, an assessment of DART operations and staffing, descriptions of problems or “incidents within the incident” and how they were handled, and identify any gaps in skills, staffing or logistics. The report will include a section on lessons learned during the incident.

### **Documentation**

Documentation of the incident will include all registration and animal intake forms, photographs of pets and owners, volunteer registration forms, incident logs kept by the pet shelter supervisor and DART liaison, receipts for purchases, and thank you letters. This documentation will form the basis of the DART report submitted to the Incident Commander but remain the property of DART. Any information included on these forms will be considered confidential.

### **Close-out meeting**

The DART Liaison and the Pet Shelter Supervisor will attend the EOC close out meeting to help assess management of the incident and identify problems. One of them will give a verbal report of the DART shelter operations during close out.

Typically, the DART team will not conduct its own close-out meeting but will review the incident in the next regularly scheduled DART meeting and discuss problems and skill gaps in DART operations.

### **Thank you letters**

The DART team will write thank you letters to people, agencies or companies who assisted DART during the disaster. The thank you letters will be signed by an officer or board member of DART. These letters should be written within a week of the EOC close out meeting and will form part of the documentation of the incident.

## **VII. Long Term Sheltering**

In some disasters, there is the possibility that the response and recovery operations may stretch into weeks or months. Most DART teams, being volunteers, are not prepared or able to continue operating an emergency shelter for large numbers of animals of evacuated people who have been left homeless by a disaster.

Currently, DART teams and animal shelters focus on three possibilities:

1. Boarding animals at vet clinics and private kennels. This is especially necessary in the case of known aggressive animals that can't be fostered. Post-disaster, as private kennels and vet clinics begin to open back up for business, arrangements can be made for long-term boarding.
2. Fostering in the local community. DART teams and animal organizations have been working to develop extensive lists of people willing to foster animals. These are typically people who are members of their local humane society; for example, the Leon County Humane Society has a list of 150 foster families. Humane societies and county animal shelter volunteers form the backbone of this effort. Fostering of animals for people made homeless by a disaster is designed as a long term but still temporary measure – the rightful owners will take the pet back as soon as they are in housing where they can keep their pet. Fostering programs need to be designed with care, with possible fosters approved ahead of time. Similar programs are used nationwide for fostering the pets of battered women who seek refuge in a battered women's shelter but are not permitted to have pets with them in the shelter.
3. Moving animals from an emergency shelter to a County shelter in another city or county who have space for the animals. This effort has included shipping adoptable shelter animals from a local shelter to locations nation wide in order to reduce the population at the animal shelter and could possibly make room for boarding the pets of disaster-affected people until they can once again take their pet back.

These are the three main thrusts of long-term animal sheltering. After reviewing all my DART material, I feel this is the most un-developed of all the DART procedures and guidelines. However, I do feel that here in Tallahassee we have a good start toward fostering out a large number of animals who are temporarily displaced by a disaster, because of the good groundwork already accomplished by LCHS, the TLC Animal Services Center, and several rescue groups in the area who have their own fostering programs.

**Appendix A**

**DART Equipment and Supplies**