Abstract - Squance

Is connection the missing link to multiagency collaboration in animal emergency management?

Growing interest and activity in animal emergency management (AEM) across a range of organisations suggests that AEM is increasingly recognised as a vital component of emergency management systems. This is especially so in countries where agriculture has a significant contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and where the protection of animals in emergencies is linked to food security and the protection of livelihoods, biodiversity, human wellbeing and communities.

As animals become included in emergency management frameworks, various government agencies and non-government organisations play important mandated and voluntary roles in supporting animal owners before, during and after disasters. However, frequently post-incident reports and reflections on disasters, such as the 2009 Victorian Black Saturday bushfires, 2016 Kaikoura earthquake, 2017 Port Hill fires and the recent 2019-20 NSW bush fire, express concerns over the lack of collaboration between agencies including those who experience the human-animal interface.

This presentation will explore AEM multiagency collaboration challenges and enhancements through action research based on three case studies: wildfire and flood events. The research findings highlight how professional silos and a failure to understand the importance of human-animal-environment (h-a-e) interdependencies has resulted in AEM being largely disconnected from emergency management overall. Additionally, we will discuss how the adoption of a One Welfare (OW) approach will support a shift from a focus on individual emergency management domains towards a transdisciplinary approach that acknowledges the interdependencies of the h-a-e interface, a range of knowledge systems (including indigenous knowledge) and, ultimately, optimises outcomes for AEM.

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