

Abstract - Taylor

Animal Ready Communities (ARCs) Community-based best practice in animal emergency management

Communities are increasingly being placed at the centre of emergency management doctrine. Phrases referring to 'community values' and 'protecting what the community values' are increasingly common and are driving new approaches in emergency management and community recovery.

Australian household pet ownership is high and we are regarded as an animal-loving nation; typically considering our pets part of our families, and valuing them as such. A recent study, commissioned by Animal Medicines Australia, estimates that since 2019 (during the COVID19 pandemic) pet ownership levels have increased from 61 to 69 per cent of households, with the numbers of cats and dogs alone estimated to be in excess of 11 million. Therefore, it is evident that, in emergency situations, individuals need to accept primary responsibility for their animals, as this would clearly be beyond the capacity of emergency services and other entities to manage, such as local government, NGOs, or agricultural departments. The emergency management system is, however, complex and can be tough to navigate without support.

This presentation will review the role of communities in animal emergency management, identifying challenges and providing case studies of two approaches currently being used in New South Wales to engage communities in emergency preparedness for their animals. The concept of 'Animal Ready Communities' will be outlined and the two case studies, one in the Blue Mountains primarily focussed on small household pets, and the other in the Hawkesbury- Nepean Valley focussed on horses and larger animals, will be discussed.

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