Abstract - Trigg

Examining the role of national planning principles for animals in Australian disaster response

Introduction. Animals' place in disaster planning was tested during Australia's 2019-20 bushfire season, with the unprecedented loss of animal life emphasising connections between human and animal welfare. The National Planning Principles for Animals in Disasters are a publicly accessible tool designed to guide effective animal integration into disaster response arrangements. In this project, Australian organisations with a stake in animal emergency management were surveyed and interviewed to examine awareness and implementation of these Principles in disaster planning.

Methodology. A national survey was distributed in emergency and animal management networks in late 2020. Analyses described differences in implementation of the Principles in disaster planning, relating to owned animals, across organisation types and animal categories. Respondent descriptions of implementing the Principles were categorised for further analysis, with perspectives on the Principles qualitatively analysed.

Main Results. Stakeholders (n=137) worked in local government, emergency services, and animal-focused non-profits, interacted with animal owners (74.5%), and had oversight for animal management (78.1%), and understood emergency animal arrangements for their state or territory (73.0%). For stakeholders aware of the Principles (58.1%), half had implemented them (53.8%). Implemented Principles for creating plans most often related to welfare benefits to humans and animals from animal inclusion in plans, and to identifying responsibilities for animals. Principles relating to need for animal welfare consultation, acknowledging local government expertise, and use of accessible language were less often implemented. Disaster planning arrangements indicated a need to focus on prevention and recovery arrangements for animal welfare. Plans supported Principles for animal management logistical challenges in disaster response. However less implementation of formalised animal welfare support arrangements and plan testing requirements was seen.

Implications. Emergency animal management stakeholders see value in applying the Principles, although there is a need to further promote and monitor implementation of specific Principles in animal welfare planning arrangements.

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