

RELATED TERMS

- Hurricane Katrina
- Louisiana State University



Lessons Learned Information Sharing

www.LLIS.gov

PRIMARY DISCIPLINES

- Emergency Management
- Veterinary

LESSON LEARNED

Emergency Animal Sheltering: Scheduling Daily Lights-Off Time Periods

SUMMARY

Emergency animal shelter managers should establish a daily operations schedule that provides lights-off times for the animals. Routine quiet, dark times reduce the animals' stress levels, which in turn reduces noise levels in the shelter and may mitigate aggressive behavior.

DESCRIPTION

In late August 2005, Hurricane Katrina prompted the evacuation of more than a million people from the New Orleans metropolitan area. Many of the evacuees brought their pets with them, even though Red Cross shelters did not accept pets because of health and safety regulations. The Louisiana State Animal Response Team and its partner organizations established an emergency shelter for owned animals at Louisiana State University's Parker Coliseum. The Coliseum sheltered over 1,200 animals at its peak capacity.

The shelter lights were initially kept on for 24 hours every day to facilitate animal intake. This continual activity and lighting prevented the boarded animals from getting sufficient rest, which may have increased their stress levels. Many animals exhibited aggressive behavior, and the shelter staff received numerous bites. In addition, continuous barking exposed shelter workers to excessive noise levels with potential for long-term hearing loss.

Once the animal admission rate diminished, shelter staff established a daily schedule to provide the animals with "quiet times" when both the lighting level and shelter worker activity was minimized. The schedule designated two four-hour time periods each day when shelter workers would perform critical shelter tasks (e.g. cleaning, feeding, watering, and medicating) with the lights on. At all other times, the lighting level was reduced to the lowest level consistent with safety, and an effort was made to provide minimal work disturbances. When the shelter adopted this schedule, the animals adjusted quickly to a routine of resting and sleeping during the quiet times. The daily schedule not only provided the animals with rest time, but also conveyed a sense of

LSU Emergency Animal Shelter Schedule	
Time	Activity
8 a.m.	Turn lights on
8 a.m. – Noon	Water, feed, clean kennels, walk dogs, and medicate animals
Noon	Turn lights off
Noon – 5 p.m.	Transfer pets due to inappropriate kennel size, medical issues, inappropriate animal behavior towards care takers, etc.
5 p.m.	Turn lights on
5 – 9 p.m.	Clean kennels, water, and medicate animals
9 p.m.	Lights out, shelter closed
9 p.m. – 8 a.m.	Quiet time, only minimal supervision by medical personnel

routine throughout the shelter's month-long operation. As a result of the regularly scheduled routine of rest and activity, many animals appeared to be much less irritable and aggressive.

The adoption of the daily schedule also improved security operations and volunteer management. The schedule improved the shelter's security measures by restricting access during the lights-off periods, which helped to prevent thieves and other unauthorized personnel from entering the facility. The schedule also allowed the shelter staff to better coordinate volunteer activities, since volunteers were only needed in large numbers during the two lights-on time periods.

As soon as practical, emergency animal shelter managers should establish a daily operations schedule that provides lights-off times for the animals. Routine quiet, dark times may reduce the animals' stress levels, may mitigate aggressive behavior, and definitely reduce noise levels due to barking in the shelter.

CITATIONS

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Animals in Public Evacuation Centers*. 22 Sep 2005.

https://www.llis.dhs.gov/member/secure/detail.cfm?content_id=16012

Senior, David. Planning Manager, Louisiana State University Emergency Animal Shelter. Interview with *Lessons Learned Information Sharing*, 22 Mar 2007.

Susan K. Mikota. *LSU Emergency Animal Shelter Disaster Response Manual: Guidelines for Establishing a Shelter for Owned Animals During Disasters*. Louisiana State University Emergency Animal Shelter. 24 May 2006.

https://www.llis.dhs.gov/member/secure/detail.cfm?content_id=19003

DISCLAIMER

Lessons Learned Information Sharing (LLIS.gov) is the US Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency's national online network of lessons learned, best practices, and innovative ideas for the emergency response and homeland security communities. The Web site and its contents are provided for informational purposes only, without warranty or guarantee of any kind, and do not represent the official positions of the US Department of Homeland Security. For more information on *LLIS.gov*, please email Feedback@llis.dhs.gov or visit www.llis.gov.