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Tim Manning Named FSA Executive Director for State of Florida



Tim Manning (l) introduces FDACS Commissioner Charles Bronson at the 2007 SART Conference.



Tim Manning gives FWC Capt. Linda Harrison a tour of '08 SART exercise.



Laura Bevan and Tim Manning discuss policy issues at a 2009 Steering Committee meeting.

November 13, 2009 was a good date for **Tim Manning** ... and for Florida. On that Friday, SART's calm, dependable co-chair was named Florida State Executive Director for the USDA's Farm Service Agency. "Tim has a solid understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing rural communities," commented U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

Manning has more than 30 years experience administering farm subsidy programs with USDA. "It seems like just a few years ago," he says, although it was actually 14 years – that he served as Acting State Executive Director. Subsequently, he has been Dispute Resolution Coordinator representing FSA in administrative hearings. He also has experience with the Agricultural Mediation Service, as Homeland Security Emergency Operations Coordinator (protecting Florida's food supply against terrorist attacks) and as a member of the Catastrophic Planning Committee (developing an emergency response system in case a monster hurricane hits).

In 2005, Tim won the Administrator's Award for Outstanding Service in administering disaster relief to Florida's farmers. He has been instrumental in developing the SART program in Florida, often chairing conferences and meetings, refereeing difficult questions and fully supporting the multi-agency coordinating role of the organization. In addition, he has put his amateur weather forecasting abilities to good use both for SART and for Florida.

Congratulations, **Tim Manning**, Florida FSA Executive Director!

VETS Team Assists With Cat Rescue

Maury Swee president of 10th Life Sanctuary (www.10thlife.org) 14489 E. SR 60 in Hendry County promised “lifetime care” for unwanted and feral cats with a donation of \$550. “The “10th Life” Sanctuary is a seven-year-old ‘no-kill’ 501(c)(3) not-for-profit charity dedicated to providing lifetime care to sick, unwanted, and feral cats. At the present time we are providing lifetime care for over 600 cats.”



A 2007 document filed with the IRS and shown on air by NBC 2 News, Ft. Myers – which aired a two-part series on the sanctuary, November 9-10 (www.nbc-2.com) – stated that there were twice that many cats present and, on air, Swee said that 600 cats had “passed on.” Swee also admitted that he was “conducting research” on the cats by injecting them with cobra venom to control herpes. In a related story picked up by many newspapers in the state, Swee said he took in more than \$250,000 donations in 2008.

A series of photos taken by a former employee however posted on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5gD296oLLg document the deplorable situation at the Sanctuary during the summer and fall 2009. The video noted that “Visitors are not allowed.

Volunteers not encouraged.” The photos, NBC news coverage and local complaints ultimately prompted animal control officials to take action.

November 16

UF’s Dr. Julie Levy, DVM, makes an unannounced visit to the Sanctuary. She is accompanied by other UF experts and representatives from HSUS and ASPCA. The team finds the Sanctuary’s conditions and the animal’s care inadequate. The Sanctuary is declared “unable to provide an adequate standard of care.”

November 19

UF Director of Veterinary Medicine John Haven becomes Incident Commander and brings the VETS team and select animal rescue volunteers to assist state and county authorities who order the Sanctuary closed. City of LaBelle, Florida Animal Control accepts custody of approximately 600 cats.

November 23-25

Veterinarians from Maddie’s Shelter



Medicine Program at UF examine the cats. Some 93 animals are too ill to save, but many are placed for agency adoption (and their status can be checked at www.ufsheltermedicine.com/catrescue.htm). Several infectious diseases including herpes virus, calicivirus, giardia, cryptosporidia and tritrichomonas are identified. All cats are spayed or neutered and microchipped as well as vaccinated, treated for parasites and tested for FeLV and FIV prior to transfer to other agencies. At this time there are approximately 200 healthy friendly cats, 150 healthy feral cats, and 175 sick cats in need of placement.

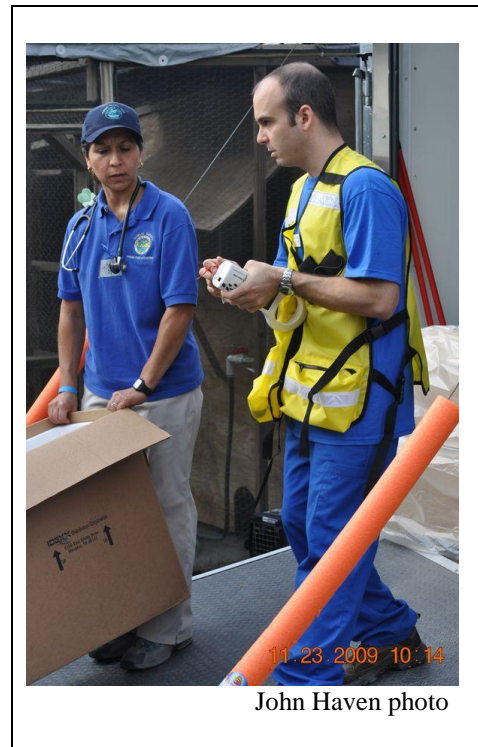
November 24

Transfer of rescued cats begins. Hendry County expects to press charges of animal cruelty although Swee claims that the cause of the difficulties were animal rights activists breaking into the facility and poisoning the animals.

According to John Haven, response team Incident Commander: On November 23rd, the UF College of Veterinary Medicine VETS disaster response team and the UF CVM Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program staff coordinated a multi-agency response to assist LaBelle Florida Animal Control, which sought to shut down a cat sanctuary with approximately 600 animals. The response required capturing the cats, performing triage, physical exams, vaccinations and medical treatment over the course of three days, as well as extensive cleaning of the facility.

The VETS team was assisted by Tampa Bay DART/SPCA, HSUS, PetSmart Charities, ASPCA, Cat Depot, Polk County Animal Control, Palm Beach County Animal Control, Pasco County Animal Control, Manatee County Animal Control, Glades County Fire Department and Animal Control, and several private veterinarians and volunteers.

A total of 68 volunteers participated in the response. Tuesday the 24th was the peak day with 50 volunteers. Some volunteers stayed the whole three day operation, while some could only help for a day, but they worked tirelessly, even late into the night in less than ideal weather. What seemed like an insurmountable task was accomplished quickly. Adoptions began on Wednesday coordinated by Tampa Bay DART. An adoption application is available at <http://www.ufsheltermedicine.com/CatRescue.htm>.



Haven noted that many participating agencies had never worked together before, but they quickly jelled, and worked long hours as a team in the heat and rain. The two largest participating teams, UF VETS and Tampa Bay DART/SPCA, both funded by grants and donations, had previously conducted two large scale training exercises together, and had participated in Incident Command System training classes. "That training and familiarity truly paid off. This was an excellent example of what a SART team does in the animal rescue sphere," Haven said. "It's SART in action."

Report from the National Summit

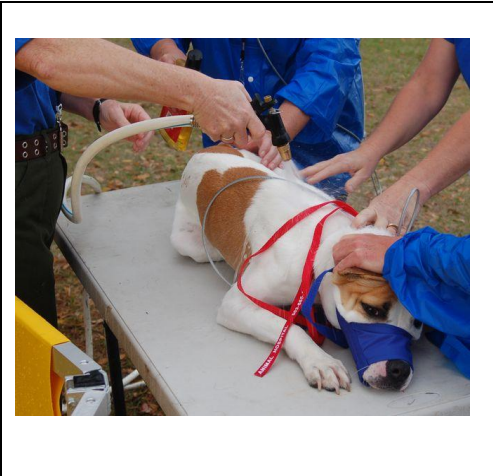
The 2009 National Summit on Companion Animal Emergency Management took place December 8-10 at the USDA Center for Animal Welfare Kansas City, MO. The meeting was hosted by the National Alliance of State Animal and Agricultural Emergency Programs (NASAAEP) and sponsored by USDA/APHIS' Animal Care.

For this working summit, all representatives were invited – it was not an open for the public. Florida representatives were ESF 17 Coordinator Joe Kight (Animals and Agriculture), UF Vet Med's John Haven, FDACS' David Perry (David was co-chair of the ASAR working group), Lt. Daisy Harsch (Palm Beach County Animal Care & Control) and Sumter DART's Ronnie Graves.

There were 8 "Best Practice" working groups: ASAR, Evacuation and Transportation, Planning & Response Management, Preparedness & Community Outreach, Sheltering, Training, Veterinary Issues – Animal Decontamination, HazMat and Radiological Issues, and Veterinary Issues – Disaster Veterinary Care.

Joe Kight Reports

FDACS' Joe Kight was Florida's official delegate. He thought the presence of both USDA and FEMA, and the presence of representatives from 47 states, added gravity to the conference which he said "met its objectives" of finding solutions to the problems of animals in emergencies.



Kight also sat in on the Search and Rescue seminars and notes that the group struggled forward toward developing a professional approach to training and accreditation for animal rescue situations. “One of the things that struck me was the willingness of people to work together,” he says. “Everyone seemed to leave their egos and agency agendas at home in pursuit of a higher goal.”

Ronnie Graves Reports

Representing Florida, Ronnie Graves

said about 90 people were present.

Graves, who has a lot of expertise in trucking and hauling, attended the Evacuation and Transportation working group. One of the significant issues among many discussed was a review of the capabilities of the large, refrigerated semi-trailers that would be used to transport animals after a disaster.

A static test involving 122 dogs in one of the trailers showed that air quality inside the trailer deteriorated within 2 ½ hours. Carbon dioxide collected at floor level.

The supplier claimed that the trailers leak air and thus in movement the animals inside would have access to fresh air. Graves and others argued that this was not the case and that animals needed fresh air. The trailers needed vent holes; trailers should not be sealed. In fact, they should also have fans to force fresh air inside at floor level.

Another serious issue discussed was having a single unified group develop an animal responder credentialing program. “It looks like NARSC (the National Animal Rescue & Sheltering Coalition – www.narsc.net) is going to be the primary group for this. A state manager needs to know that when a group like Sumter DART, for instance, is contacted for help that he or she does not have to micro-manage the group, that they have the training and ability to accomplish the task.”

Graves recognized a difference between the way human responders and animal responders are viewed and treated in the context of a disaster situation. Human responders are treated like highly skilled professionals; animal responders are treated like walk-in volunteers. Credentialing, he feels, would help with that identification and help animal responders do their job better.



John Haven photo

Daisy Harsch Reports

Although she did not attend the entire meeting, Daisy Harsch went home with a mission.

Harsch was a member of the Search & Rescue working group and noted that there are no “best practice” guidelines for animals yet. One of the points of concern to her – and this was a common theme with the people interviewed for this story – is a perceived lack of professionalism of the animal responders and the lack of a relationship with highly trained, elite human responders.

“Animal groups don’t have a very good working relationship with them yet and we need to establish that.

We need to find common ground and build relationships, but it would be the rare human response group that would let animal responders accompany them in an emergency situation right now. I think we’re viewed as being groups (or individuals) that don’t really have much to offer. So it’s our job to prove ourselves. We need to educate them about animal response and show how we can make human response more effective.”

So what is Harsch doing to further that effort in her community? “I’m getting in touch with the Palm Beach Fire and Rescue and the Fire Chief’s Association. We have things that we can teach human rescue groups whether they are working in Florida after a hurricane or in Pakistan after an earthquake. When they go in to a building to help or look for people, there will frequently be animals there and these animals won’t just jump into a responder’s arms and begin licking their faces in joy. The animals will be scared and hungry and perhaps aggressively protective of their owners. So we have to make contact with human responder groups and show how we can benefit them.”

John Haven Reports

The working group or task force on Training was John Haven’s special home for the conference. “It was great having all the national partners together – federal, state and NGOs (non-governmental organizations) – because good things for animal and agricultural response are going to come out of this effort.”

Haven says that the federal partners attended with a “How can we help?” approach and that made discussion easier, especially among the groups and individuals with

lots of actual response hours. “There are so many things we can do to build competence: nationally recognized standards for training, a clear understanding of reimbursements available and so on. Plus, FEMA has blocked out funds for a follow-up conference next year so it looks like the ball is really rolling now ... and in the right direction.”

Volunteers During Disasters

Here are some great resources to help guide your organization’s planning for that day when you need to call volunteers to help during a disaster. Each is accessed directly through www.citizencorps.gov/councils/volunteer_mgmt.shtm.

“The Citizen Corps Volunteer Liability Guide: An Overview of Legal Issues and Approaches to Address Liability for Emergency Volunteers”



Engaging the public is a critical part of Citizen Corps’ mission. Well-trained volunteers supplement governmental resources in all phases of emergency management.

Nevertheless, liability is a significant concern and a potential barrier to volunteer involvement in emergency services. Liability, legal responsibility for one’s acts or omissions, includes diverse concerns: legally imposed payment of damages for personal injury or property damage; penalties for practicing a profession or trade without the required license or permit; compensation for lost income and medical expenses of an injured volunteer; and damages for breach of contract.

The Citizen Corps Volunteer Liability Guide is overly long, but gives an overview of liability and suggests some approaches to addressing these concerns.

“Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Times of Disaster: The Synergy of Structure and Good Intentions”



John Haven photo

When disaster strikes, emergency management and non-profit organizations respond according to a plan. Each has a specific role in ensuring effective response to and recovery from the disaster’s devastation.

Yet spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteers – our neighbors and ordinary citizens – continue to pose a challenge. They arrive on-site at a disaster ready to roll up their sleeves and help. Because they are not associated with any part of the existing emergency management response system, their offers of help are often underutilized and even problematic.

This short document talks about the paradox of people’s willingness to volunteer versus the system’s capacity to utilize them effectively.

Florida Group Organizing for Coordinated Response

A group of experienced Florida animal responders has met to discuss filling a void in local coordinated response to small-scale incidents. Led by Tampa Bay SPCA officer Connie Brooks, the group is considering the need for a Florida-based coalition – a single-source provider – to assist with animal emergencies in that “gray area” between all-out disasters with national implications, such as Hurricane Katrina, and the day-to-day operations of county animal services.

Tampa Bay DART’s Allan Schwartz (allans0416@yahoo.com) says FDACS is doing a fine job watching over the food and agricultural resources of the state, but to have the small animal burden added in a time when budgets are smaller than ever ...

well, it is time for citizens to step up and volunteer. Schwartz has more than 20 years of volunteer animal response work to his credit and he says that a Florida-based team with a single head could make responding to animal emergencies efficient.

“It’s sort of a one-stop-shopping idea for when an incident commander needs help ... and there are a lot of situations where an organized state group could quickly respond, maybe within hours, when it might take the national office of a non-governmental organization days to get in gear and get ‘boots on the ground.’ This way, instead of calling a half dozen or more national and regional animal response groups, searching out what resources are available, an incident commander could just contact one person.

“A single umbrella group could keep state records of training and up-to-date contact information much easier and mobilize much faster than having to rely on people in Ohio and Alabama and Oregon ... although when a major disaster hits, those folks and the national resources they can muster are be invaluable.

“Plus, if we formed a 501 c(3) group here in Florida we could apply for grants for training and equipment. One of the names we’ve kicked around is the Professional Animal Rescue Coalition, but there might be others that would be better and people can contact me at any time and let me know their ideas.”

2010 Severe Weather Awareness Week

January 24-30 is Florida Severe Weather Awareness Week. The annual public awareness campaign includes a poster and video public service announcement (PSA) contests www.FloridaDisaster.org/SWAW2010. "The goal is to educate people about Florida’ natural hazards, and help them stay safe," said Interim Director Ruben D. Almaguer of the Florida Division of Emergency Management.

Poster Contest

The poster contest is open for all 4th and 5th grade school children. Winning art will be displayed in the State EOC during the first full week of February 2010.

Public Service Announcement(s)

Middle and high school students in grades 6-8 and 9-12 can produce a 30-second PSA with a safety or preparedness message about tornadoes, rip currents or using NOAA Weather Radios. Final digital videos must be on a DVD. One individual or group (limit 4 people per group) winner will be chosen from both middle school and high school entries. Winning video(s) will be professionally reproduced for broadcast by DEM in



its state-wide public awareness campaign. A production team will travel to the winner(s) hometown to shoot the PSA with winner(s) as the director(s). Winners will be honored at a rally in their hometown.

Prizes & Winning

Postmark entries before December 31. Prizes include tickets to Walt Disney World and Universal Studios. Winners will be announced on January 23, 2010.

These contests are part of an annual campaign that includes a state-wide **Tornado Drill** conducted by the National Weather Service at 10:10 a.m. EDT on January 27. www.FloridaDisaster.org/SWAW2010.

FWC Seizes 13 Venomous Snakes

Possession, Permitting and Seizure

An item from the Associated Press recently reported that while serving a warrant at a house in Deltona, Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) officers “stumbled upon 13 venomous snakes.” The owner did not have a permit to keep them.



"The Burmese python has become the poster child for a much bigger issue," said Tim Breault, FWC's director of Habitat and Species Conservation. "Non-natives are the real issue here, and it calls for full engagement with federal leadership."

Karen Parker in FWC's North Central Regional Office said the snakes were seized and distributed among permitted individuals who had the facilities to care for them. While some of the snakes were native rattlesnakes, some were non-native species and could not be released into the wild.

What motivates people to keep snakes? "Some people like them as pets," Parker said. "You can milk rattlesnakes, for instance; the venom has medicinal uses; and there is a huge international trade in exotic reptiles."

Conflicting Jurisdiction and Regulation

In January 2008, Deltona asked its city attorney to research the legal status of resident Brian Radenberg who owned more than 50 venomous snakes, including cobras, Eastern Diamondback rattlesnakes, Gabon vipers and Green Mambas. Although a local ordinance

prohibited keeping venomous reptiles, the man was licensed by FWC.

Ultimately, the city was not successful and Radenberg kept his snakes.

In September 2009 local television station WESH interviewed Radenberg and other Deltona snake owners. Ron Doria a medical sales director who owns

more than 40 said exotic snakes get “a bad rap” and noted the thrill of handling poisonous snakes. Radenberg now owns more than 100 snakes; he they felt “comfortable.” Software engineer Scott Quint, the owner of 35 snakes, said they were beautiful animals.

So does the state license preempt local ordinance?

The WESH story noted that Radenberg and Doria had posted warnings on their home stating that venomous snakes live inside. “That way, if emergency personnel such as firefighters or police ever have to enter, they'll be forewarned.”

So what happens if...?

- Following Hurricane Andrew, it is believed that thousands of exotic animals escaped into the wild.
- If a tornado appears on radar, will the owner of 100 exotic snakes return home to safely evacuate them ... or save himself first?
- After a hurricane flattens the house, will responders read the notice on the door? Will there still be a door?

Our human record as exotic pet owners is quite mixed. The freedom to own Burmese pythons requires the responsibility to keep them out of Florida's ecosystem. How does someone who owns “Gabon vipers and Green Mambas” – highly poisonous snakes – balance individual freedom versus social responsibility? Education – Licensing – Evacuation Plan.

And no less a paragon of individual freedom, president Ronald Regan, famously noted “Trust ... but verify.”

Side Note

Ophidiophobia (sometimes ophiophobia) is the fear of snakes. Think Indiana Jones. Herpetophobia is the more general fear of reptiles.

AMNESTY NEWS FLASH!

On December 10th FWC directed its staff to immediately implement an executive order that will allow reptiles of concern to be turned over to authorized reptile of concern permit holders with no questions asked. Read the entire press release at: http://myfwc.com/NEWSROOM/09/statewide/News_09_X_ROCAmnesty.htm.



Photo 339

There's nothing quite like that warm and fuzzy feeling you have when you know that, in an emergency, you're covered. You own several kinds of insurance. You wear a seatbelt in case the idiot in front of you slams on his brakes. And in case a fire breaks out, you have a fire extinguisher, and you know right where it is. All you have to do is find that darn key.

(Courtesy Naval Safety Center
www.safetycenter.navy.mil)

About the SART Sentinel

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If you have a story or photo that you would like to have considered for publication in *The SART SENTINEL*, please contact the Editors.