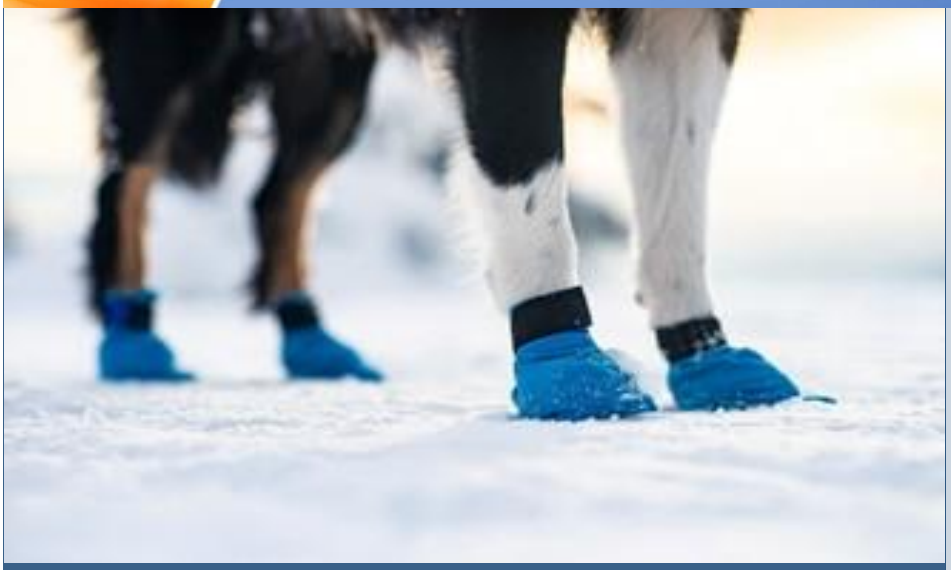
The Sentinel

Newsletter of the Florida State Agricultural Response Team



Cold weather affects us all – especially our pets!

Special Features of this Issue:

- *Finding Dory*
- *Small Animal Emergency Sheltering Training*
- *New World Screwworm Update*

Another Cold Winter

Many remember the snowstorm that rolled through northern Florida in January 2025. That storm dropped record breaking amounts of snow in parts of the Florida Panhandle. The official numbers were 10 inches in Milton and 8.9 inches in Pensacola; far surpassing over 130-year-old records.

While January 2026 attempted to start out the same as 2025, it didn't pan out the same way. Many towns on the Panhandle received a good dusting of snow that didn't stick around very long.

As we get into the heart of winter, take a few moments to remember how to care for our animals during these cold days. A general rule to keep in mind is if it's too cold for you, it's probably too cold for your pets. Be sure to bring them inside; don't leave them exposed to the elements or in vehicles. Paw protection is also critical as this area is where they can be subjected to frostbite (if the temperatures are cold enough) or exposed to ice melting chemicals that may not be pet friendly. For dogs, this can easily be done by putting dog booties on them.

For more information and tips on protecting your pets during these cold days, or when traveling to colder regions, visit the ASPCA website at: https://www.aspca.org/pet-care/general-pet-care/cold-weather-safety-tips

Photo: An ASPCA employee tends to a small dog.

COMING SOON!

K-9 First Responder & K-9 Tactical Emergency Casualty Care 3-Day Training

Shown below: Expert instructors from K9 MEDIC® deliver an intense, hands-on training.
Read more on Page 7.

Finding Dory

The Blue Tangs are at the top of the saltwater aquarium fish hobby as one of the most popular and heavily collected fish with global trade likely exceeding 250 thousand fish annually. There are captive breeding programs working hard to offer a sustainable option to the global aquarium hobby.

Photo: A Blue Tang in a saltwater aquarium.

The captive breeding of the Blue Tang comes with many challenges:

- Their eggs are tiny typically measuring less than 1 millimeter in diameter, transparent, and buoyant causing them to float freely in the water column until they hatch. These traits cause the eggs to be sucked up and destroyed by filtration systems in their captive environments.
- Blue tangs have an incredibly long larval stage emerging from their eggs as plankton like organisms taking several weeks to several months to grow.
- The Larvae and fry have a specialized diet of single cell organisms like Ciliates and microscopic invertebrates like Rotifers or Copepods.

There is some good news; in July of 2016, a team of researchers working with University of Florida's Tropical Aquaculture Lab in partnership with Rising Tide Conservation were able to successfully breed the first shoal of Blue Tangs. Out of tens of thousands of eggs, just 27 Juveniles survived. This may not seem like much, but this success marks a turning point in the aquarium hobby that could have lasting impacts on wild fish and reef ecosystems. Large scale investment captive-bred blue tangs could curb cyanide fishing, reduce reef damage, and improve fish health for aquarists.

ɾotifer | Microscopic, Multicellular, Aquatic." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., n.d., https://www.britannica.com/animal/rotifer

ɹlbot, Ret. "D o r y Bred in Captivity for First Time." *National Geographic*, 19 July 2016, https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/wildlife-blue-tang-aquarium-trade. **Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory.** *University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences*, n.d., https://tal.ifas.ufl.edu

ʞbout Rising Tide." *Rising Tide Conservation*, n.d., https://www.risingtideconservation.org/aboutrisingtide/.
ʞational Geographic." *National Geographic*, n.d., https://www.nationalgeographic.com

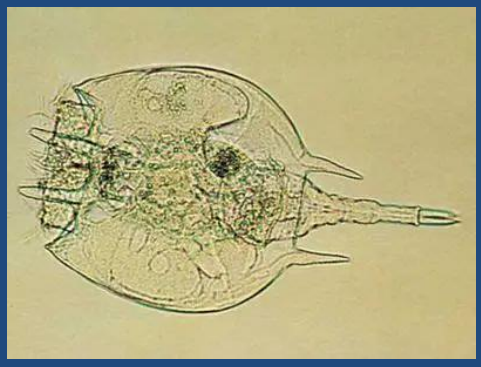


Photo: Rotifer (Platyias quadricornis)

New World Screwworm

Story provided by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

New World screwworms are fly larvae (maggots) that can infest livestock and other warm-blooded animals, including people. They most often enter an animal through an open wound. They feed on the animal's living flesh and, if not treated, infestations can be fatal. While New World screwworm (*Cochliomyia hominivorax*) has not been widely present in the United States since the 1960s, it is still found in most of South America and in five Caribbean countries. Cases began spreading in 2023, heading north from Panama, and have reached southern Mexico, increasing the risk of reintroduction into the United States.

Signs

Screwworms are typically found on warm-blooded animals that have a draining or enlarging wound.

Screwworm eggs are creamy and white and deposited in a shingle-like manner on or near the edges of superficial wounds. The larvae are cylindrical with one pointed end and one blunt end and have rings of dark brown spines around the body. Female screwworm flies are larger than a housefly with a dark blue to blue-green body and reddish-orange head.

Almost any type of wound can become infested with screwworm larvae, including those caused by feeding ticks, castration, dehorning, branding, shearing, barbed wire fences, and even shedding of antler velvet in deer. The navels of newborn mammals can also become infested.

Guidance for Animal Health

Carefully inspect animal wounds and hides for signs of screwworm. Owners should immediately consult their veterinarian if a case of screwworm is suspected.

Continued, next page.

New World Screwworm (continued)

Story provided by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Treatment

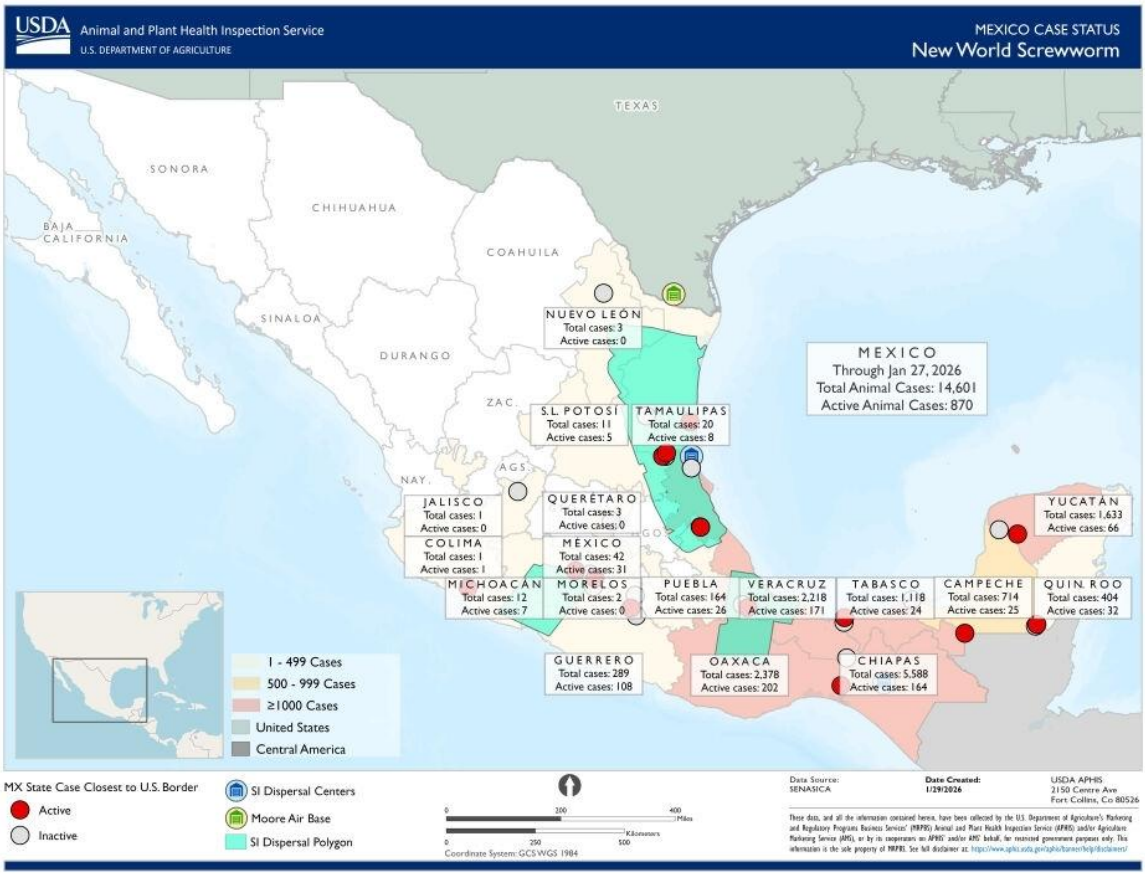
Screwworm infestation is treated by cleaning the site and topical application of a pesticide or other medication effective at killing the screwworm larvae. Treated wounds should be inspected daily until completely healed. The examining veterinarian will remove larvae from the wound with tweezers, place them in alcohol, and report to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Division of Animal Industry (State Veterinarian's Office).

Report Suspected Cases

- **By phone during office hours:** (850) 410-0900
- **By phone after hours:** 1-800-342-5869
- **Via email:** RAD@FDACS.gov
- **Report online at:** www.FDACS.gov/RAD

Wildlife Reports

To report sick or injured wildlife, including a suspected screwworm infestation, call the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) at 1-888-404-FWCC (3922) or email the Wildlife Health Team at WildlifeHealthTeam@MyFWC.com.



Source: USDA APHIS (Updated 1/20/2026)

New World Screwworm Resources

- Information on the Screwworm Eradication Program (USDA APHIS)
- Commissioner Wilton Simpson, FDACS Urge Vigilance as New World Screwworm Threat Increases
- FDACS – New World Screwworm Information Page

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Small Animal Emergency Sheltering Training

Florida State Animal Response Coalition (FLSARC) provides Small Animal Emergency Sheltering training for Florida communities. These courses teach the unique procedures, skills, and knowledge necessary to build and operate a temporary emergency animal shelter in response to natural disasters and animal cruelty cases. These courses were created and designed by experts from many organizations including Florida SART, University of Florida Veterinary Emergency Treatment Service (VETS) Team, and leadership of FLSARC. This training is state-certified by the Florida Division of Emergency Management.

Awareness Level 1	Operations Level 2
• February 6, Hillsborough County • March 6, Charlotte County • April 10, Highlands County • May 6, St. Lucie County • June 5, Seminole County • June 12, Miami-Dade County	• March 19, Jefferson County • April 28, Hernando County • May 7, St. Lucie County • May 27, Sarasota County

To register, visit: https://flsarc.org/training-classes-events

2026 EDEN Spring Training Set for Tampa

The 2026 Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) Spring Training will take place in Tampa from February 24 to 26, 2026. Early bird registration closes January 15. This year, attendees will have the opportunity to participate in a variety of high-impact trainings and experiences, including:

- FEMA Incident Command System (ICS) trainings
- Train the Trainer sessions
- Discussions surrounding mental health and recovery resources
- A pre-training workshop and an excursion

For more information, visit: https://eden-tampa.rsvpify.com

SART Partners Meeting

The following meeting is by invitation only to primary representatives of SART partner agencies and is not open to the public:

- Monthly Virtual Meeting – February 11,2026 at 10:00 a.m. (via Microsoft Teams)

In the News…

- Commissioner Wilton Simpson Announces $6.3M in Grants Available to Support Florida's Forests (FDACS)
- Harnessing AI with drone imagery to detect costly celery disease before symptoms surface (UF IFAS)
- Emergency Mystery Solved: Ari's New Lease on Life (UF VETS)

SART Offers Pet-Friendly Sheltering Online Training – Register Now!

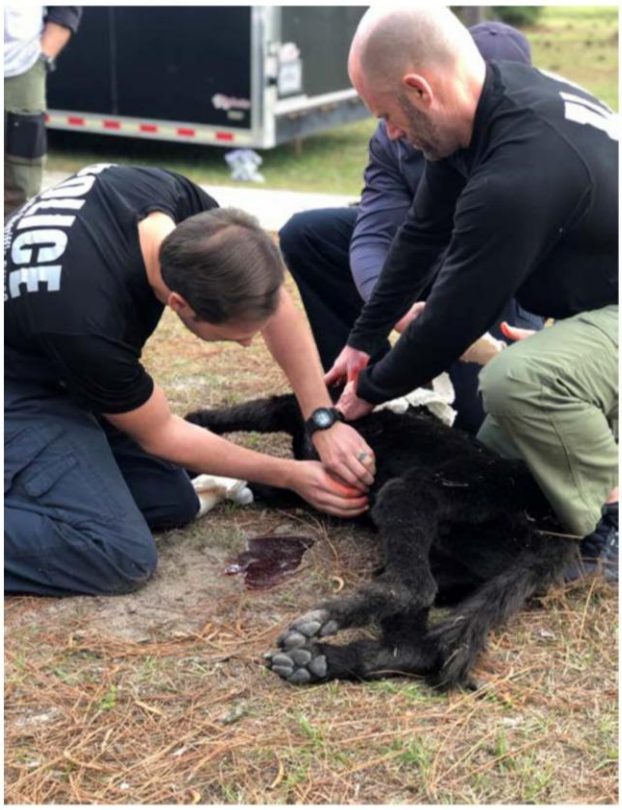
The Pet-Friendly Sheltering Online Training is the first of its kind to be offered in Florida. The Training guidance to private, local, and state entities on how to plan for and operate a pet-friendly shelter to ensure that individuals evacuating from a disaster with their household pets are accommodated.

This training includes useful information on how to:

- Use the Incident Command System in pet-friendly shelter planning and operations;
- Plan for a pet-friendly shelter;
- Understand the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act (PETS Act);
- Establish partnerships for resource coordination;
- Deliver a unified message for resource coordination;
- Deliver a unified message to the public before, during, and after an emergency, and;
- Set up, operate, and demobilize a pet-friendly shelter.

> **Tina Kimmett**
> Clemson University
>
> "This training has solidified my understanding of pet-friendly sheltering and I am more confident in my ability to help others after learning how the concepts can be and have been practically applied. I highly recommend this training."

The four-hour course is designed for emergency managers, county employees, veterinary and animal services, and shelter volunteers. There is no charge for this 100% online course. For more information, please visit www.FLSART.org.



FRI-SUN APRIL 17-19 '26
K-9 FIRST RESPONDER &
K-9 TACTICAL EMERGENCY CASUALTY CARE
3-DAY TRAINING

Are you a K-9 Handler looking to provide the best emergency field care for your four-legged partner?

Learn K-9 Tactical Emergency Casualty Care skills in a hands-on, scenario-based training with expert instructors, on advanced veterinary mannikins, and in a state-of-the-art training facility.

BECOME FIELD-READY

RECEIVE CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDIT

PAID BY FLORIDA SART FACILITIES PROVIDED BY COUNTERDRUG

APPLICATION DEADLINE

MARCH 17, 2026

APPLY AT

WWW.K9MEDIC.COM/FL/

LOCATION | TIME

Camp Blanding
Counterdrug – MCTFT
5629 SR16 West
Starke, FL 32091
Enter via main gate, left on Ave. B, after about 3 miles, follow signs to classroom.
8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., daily

K-9 FIRST RESPONDER & K-9 TACTICAL EMERGENCY CASUALTY CARE 3-DAY TRAINING

Expert instructors from K9 MEDIC® deliver an intense, hands-on training.

K9 Handler / First Responder Advanced Scope
This program includes handling K-9 emergencies in both conventional and tactical environments, so you'll be prepared to respond wherever and whenever you need. Topics range from safe K-9 handling and comprehensive assessments to treating the most common emergencies such as heat stroke and bloat/GDV, and tactical injuries such as gunshot wounds. Advanced Scope includes fluid administration and handler assist skills.

iNTENSIVE/High-Def Format
This format delivers a hands-on and scenario-based experience, along with benefits of a diversified instructor cadre. In addition to the all-class practice exercises, this format delivers an additional four rotations of hands-on skills stations and solo/team scenarios using advanced veterinary mannikins. Each student receives significant instructor feedback and attention customized to their specific needs. Multi-disciplinary instructors often include a lead expert veterinarian, experienced tactical paramedic, and field-savvy K-9 Handler.

DEADLINE TO APPLY: MARCH 17, 2026

APPLICANT SELECTION: 25 students will be selected. Preference given to early applicants. Selections made as applications are received. **Apply at** www.K9MEDIC.com/fl/

WHO CAN APPLY? Only active canine handlers currently employed with a military, federal, state, or local (city/county) agency are eligible to apply. Preference given to canine handlers working in Florida.

COST: Full tuition paid by SART! Students are responsible for their own travel, lodging and meal expenses.

CERTIFICATION: Upon completion, students receive a K9 MEDIC™ Certificate of Completion and Continuing Education Credit for EMS and law enforcement. This course meets the course prerequisites for admission to the K9 MEDIC® Trainer Academy.

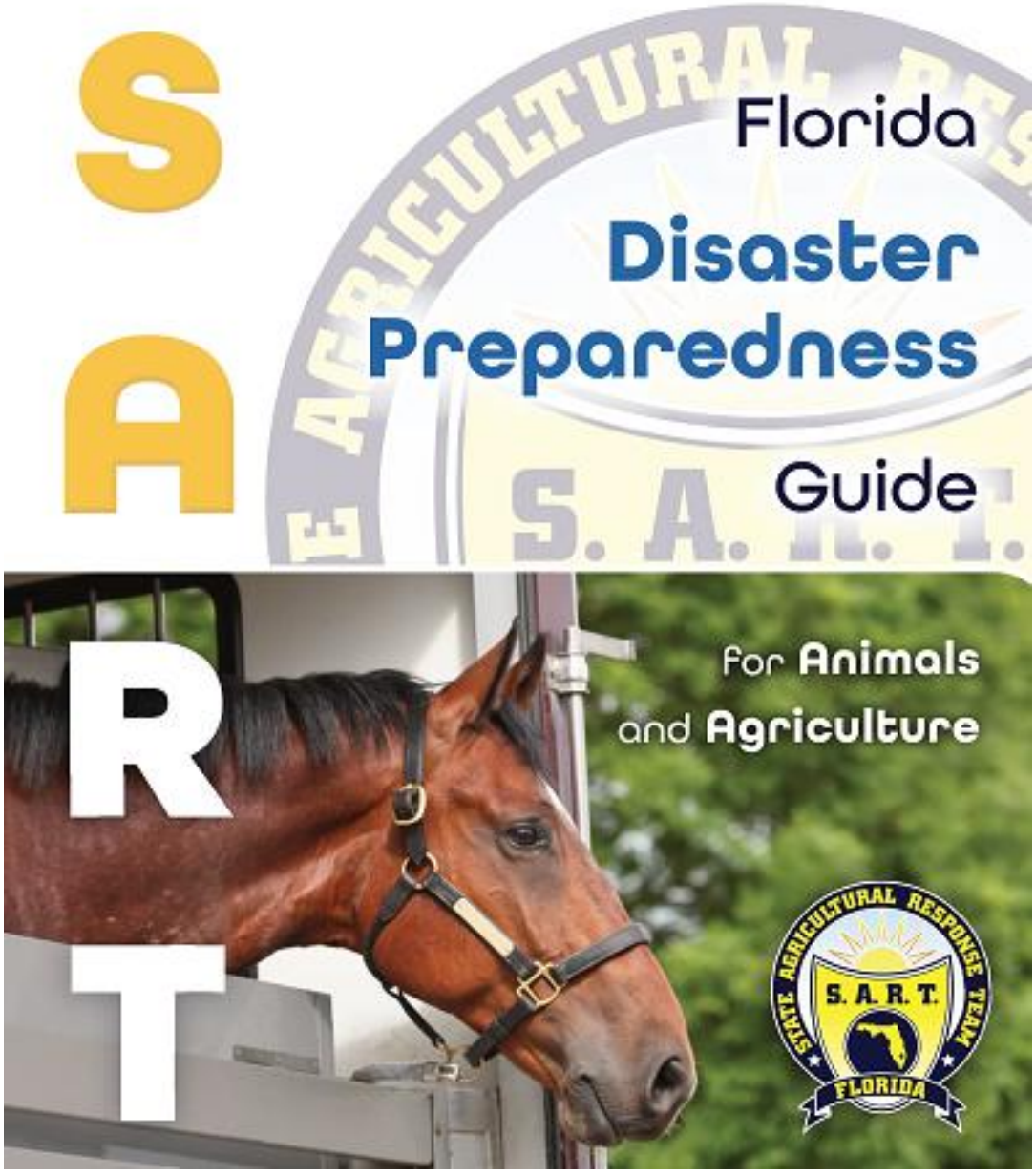
QUESTIONS? Contact Ms. LeiAnna Moorhead, (850) 251-2841, LeiAnna.Moorhead@FDACS.gov

Sponsored by the Florida State Agricultural Response Team (SART), and in partnership with K9 MEDIC® and the Multijurisdictional Counterdrug Task Force Training

The Florida Disaster Preparedness Guide for Animals and Agriculture

The Florida Disaster Preparedness Guide for Animals and Agriculture was developed by FDACS and Florida SART. This guide explores the various animal and agricultural sectors in the state of Florida that are at risk from natural and man-made disasters, and what you can do to help prepare and protect animals and agriculture before a disaster strikes. The recommendations and resources in this guide are applicable to preparing for all hazards such as hurricanes, floods, wildfires, disease introduction, hazardous material spills, and more.

This publication is available only to SART members. To access the Florida Disaster Preparedness Guide for Animals and Agriculture, visit the SART website at flsart.org, and navigate to the "Resources" tab. It may also be accessed directly at:
https://flsart.org/resource/DisasterPreparednessGuides/DisasterPreparednessGuides.jsp



Lt. Karl Froling named Search and Rescue Responder Officer of the Year

Flagler County Fire Rescue Lieutenant Karl Froling received the honor of 2025 Search and Rescue Responder Officer of the Year for his exceptional leadership, technical expertise, and lasting contributions to search and rescue operations across Florida. The Florida Fire Chiefs Association, through the Florida Association Search and Rescue (FASAR) section recently bestowed the honor on Froling.

Froling received two stellar letters of recommendation: one from Battalion Chief Brady Barry and the second from Brandi Phillips, technical rescue branch director of the University of Florida Veterinary Emergency Treatment Service (UF VETS).

Photo: Lt. Karl Froling. (Flagler County)

"I have had the privilege of working closely with Lt. Froling through the University of Florida Veterinary Emergency Treatment Service, where I serve as the Technical Rescue Branch Director," Phillips said in her letter to the selection committee. "UF VETS provides specialized training for first responders, veterinary professionals, and livestock industry stakeholders in animal technical rescue – integrating Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) disciplines with animal handling and behavior to promote both responder safety and animal welfare."

She detailed his history going back to 2012 when he worked for Volusia County Fire Rescue and responded to a complex incident involving a horse trapped in mud.

"Rather than viewing this as an isolated challenge, Lt. Froling recognized a broader need – the lack of standardized training and equipment for animal technical rescue within the fire service," Phillips said. "His proactive leadership led him to the University of Florida, where he established a partnership that has since transformed response capacity on the east coast of Florida and throughout the state."

Froling is also a key contributor to UF VETS, serving as an adjunct instructor and subject-matter expert in large animal technical rescue. His efforts have expanded statewide capacity in this specialized domain to influence the development and revision of National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards, and improved responder safety across diverse disciplines, specifically NFPA 1006 and NFPA 2500 that govern technical rescue operations.

Follow Flagler County Government on Facebook: www.facebook.com/FlaglerCountyGovernment

Become a Volunteer of the Florida Veterinary Corps Today!

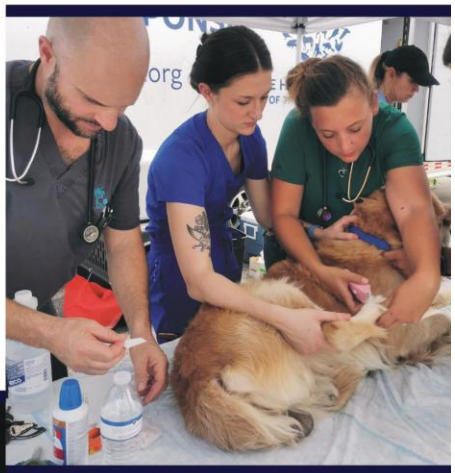
Florida veterinarians and veterinary technicians have volunteered to assist local and state emergency management officials in responding to animal emergencies. The Florida Veterinary Corps is recruiting more volunteers to help protect our state.

Become A Volunteer

To apply to the Florida Veterinary Corps, visit **www.FLSART.org**

Florida Veterinary Corps

Safeguarding Animal and Public Health in Florida



A cooperative effort of the Florida State Agricultural Response Team and its Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Florida Veterinary Medical Association, and University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine.

Florida Veterinary Corps

What is the Florida Veterinary Corps?

- The Florida Veterinary Corps (The Corps) is a component of the Florida State Agricultural Response Team (SART), established within the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and a cooperative effort with the Florida Veterinary Medical Association and the University of Florida, College of Veterinary Medicine.
- The Corps has been established to enlist veterinarians and veterinary technicians who are willing to volunteer their services in responding to animal emergencies in the state of Florida.
- During activation, Corps volunteers will work within an Incident Command System structure under state Emergency Support Function 17 as part of the State Emergency Response Team.
- Corps volunteers will be kept informed as to the status of emergencies and the need for volunteers depending upon the specific emergency.
- Volunteers may serve in veterinary infrastructure assessment teams, triage or emergency animal treatment teams, and animal disease surveillance or control teams under an Incident Command System structure.

Obligation of Corps Volunteers

- Corps volunteers will serve only when activated within an Incident Command System structure under state Emergency Support Function 17 as part of the State Emergency Response Team and adhere to all state regulations and rules.
- Complete the following four Incident Command System trainings to apply for The Corps. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides the independent study courses online, free of charge. The training is required for credentialing of emergency responders by the Department of Homeland Security. The courses are critical to train a professional volunteer Corps capable of responding as part of the state Emergency Support Function 17 and State Emergency Response Team.
  - IS-100.C: Introduction to the Incident Command System (ICS)
  - IS-200.C: Basic ICS for Initial Response
  - IS-700.B: An Introduction to the National Incident Management System (NIMS)
  - IS-800.D: National Response Framework, An Introduction
- Corps volunteers will only be activated in response to specific emergency situations and may decline service at any time.

Rationale

- Protecting animal agriculture and household pets in Florida begins locally and requires cooperation, participation, and partnership.
- Federal or other outside assistance to deal with an animal disease emergency may not be available for hours or days.
- Animal agriculture in Florida is highly vulnerable to severe disruption and financial loss through natural disasters and exotic or zoonotic diseases.
- Counties and state agencies must be prepared to respond to animal disasters through planning and identification of human and material resources.
- Natural disasters are unpredictable and cannot be prevented.
- Florida has a high risk for introduction of a foreign animal disease.

Become a Volunteer

To apply to the Florida Veterinary Corps, visit **www.FLSART.org**

Be Sure to Check Out the FDACS and UF IFAS Partnership Video

Florida SART, FDACS, and University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) teamed up to create a training video on their disaster response partnership.

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

UF IFAS UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

Published in December 2022 on YouTube, the video features interviews with LeiAnna Moorhead (FDACS Emergency Programs Manager), Dr. Saqib Mukhtar (UF/IFAS Associate Dean for Extension, Agriculture, and Natural Resources), and Dr. Angie Lindsey [Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN)].

EDEN is funded by the USDA and is a collaborative multi-state effort by cooperative extension services across the country to improve the delivery of services to citizens affected by disasters.

Dr. Lindsey highlighted the important connection that agricultural extension agents have throughout the State of Florida. "We learn so much from our Extension agents and the work that they're already doing throughout the state and the work that they do within their own communities for disaster preparedness, recovery, and response," said Dr. Lindsey.

To view the video for yourself, and to like or comment, please visit:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SI1Xsjd-FCw

Agricultural Losses and Damages from Winter 2026 Freeze Events

The purpose of this research study is to rapidly estimate the agricultural impacts resulting from the freeze events that occurred during the winter of 2026 in the State of Florida. Survey results will be combined with a detailed baseline database on agricultural assets in Florida to estimate and communicate production losses in support of informed local, state, and federal decision-making processes related to disaster declaration, response, and relief.

How do producers access the survey?

Use the web link or QR code at the bottom of this flyer or contact your local UF/IFAS Extension county office to report by phone, receive a paper copy, or request an in-person assessment, where available.

What if my operation was impacted by multiple freeze events this year?

Within the survey, you will be able to indicate that the agricultural operation has been impacted by multiple freeze events. We are interested in receiving information about the cumulative impacts of all freeze events that have impacted the operation in 2026.

What does the survey ask for?

The disaster assessment survey requests the general location of the operation (county/ZIP code), commodity-specific details including total acreage, affected acreage, and estimated production losses. In addition, there is an option to supply additional information on infrastructural assets, stored products, or stored agricultural inputs that might have been damaged or destroyed. Respondents are also able to share additional experiences and photos, if they desire.

How does this effort benefit producers and the agricultural industry in Florida?

This assessment supports informed decision-making at the local, state, and federal levels related to disaster declaration, response, and recovery. More specifically, survey responses and subsequent analyses provide data and insights to industry associations, government agencies, policy makers, and emergency management personnel.

Other agencies and organizations collect this kind of information. Should producers still complete the UF/IFAS survey along with the others?

Yes. Several agencies and organizations collect much of the same information, but each is using it for a different purpose. The different agencies and organizations often do share insights from the data they are collecting to support the various efforts related to disaster declaration, response, and relief. These efforts are seen as complementary.

See **go.ufl.edu/damage-assessment-faqs** for more FAQs.

UF IFAS UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

go.ufl.edu/Winter26FreezeAgImpacts

UF/IFAS Florida Gardening Calendars

The Gardening Calendar publications on the UF/IFAS Solutions for Your Life website gives Florida gardeners a monthly guide for what to plant and do in their gardens and includes links to useful gardening websites, all based on University of Florida research and expertise. Three different editions of the calendar provide specific tips for each of Florida's climate zones—North, Central, and South.

What to Plant in February - University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (ufl.edu)

Counties, Is Your Contact Information up to date on the SART Website?

Please review your county emergency contact information at: https://flsart.org/resource/countyinformation.jsp.

If you need to make changes to your county contact information, please send a request to LeiAnna Moorhead at LeiAnna.Moorhead@FDACS.gov. During an emergency, ESF 17 and SART provides necessary food and water to affected areas to help protect animals, agriculture, and pets.

Food Safety and Food Defense Report

A special section dedicated to feed and food emergency planning and response.

FDACS Division of Food Safety is responsible for assuring the public of a safe, wholesome, and properly represented food supply through permitting and inspection of food establishments, inspection of food products, and performance of specialized laboratory analysis on a variety of food products sold or produced in the state. The Division of Food Safety monitors food from the farm gate, through processing and distribution, to the retail point of purchase.

Food Safety for the Big Game

If you are planning on having friends and family over to watch the big game, take a timeout to serve food safely. Here are a few important tips to help keep you safe from foodborne illness:

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food.
- Separate ready-to-eat foods from raw food like raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs to help prevent cross-contamination and foodborne illness.
- Keep your hot foods hot and cold foods cold. If you are having a gathering for the big game, serve hot foods in a chafing dish, a slow cooker, or a warming tray to keep their internal temperature at 140˚F.
- Refrigerate leftovers within two hours to decrease the risk of foodborne illness.

Interested in other food safety topics? Visit the Division of Food Safety's Consumer Resources and Outreach website to find helpful videos, flyers, and more listed by category!

SART Resources and Links

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza – USDA APHIS Flock Defender
https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/defend-the-flock-program/outbreak-illness/outbreak-illness

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Dairy Cattle
https://ccmedia.fdacs.gov/content/download/115892/file/2024-HPAI-Dairy-Cattle-Announcement.pdf

Large Animal Incident Response Plan Template
https://flsart.org/resource/TLAER

Pet Sheltering Resources
https://flsart.org/resource/petshelter

Ask IFAS: Disaster Preparedness and Recovery
https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/entity/topic/disaster_preparedness_and_recovery

SART Response Equipment List and Request Information
https://flsart.org/resource/equipmentrequest.jsp

FDEM Vector Control Quick Guide
https://flsart.org/pdf/Vector%20Control%20Quick%20Guide.pdf

Please log in and update your membership information online at:

www.FLSART.org

About the *SART Sentinel*

The *SART Sentinel* is an email newsletter prepared monthly by the members of the **Florida State Agricultural Response Team** on the Florida SART website at www.FLSART.org.

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

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