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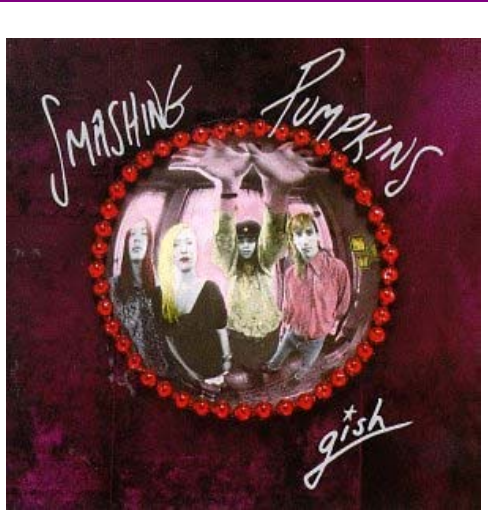
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SART Advisory Board to Meet

Please include on your calendar! The next meeting of the **Florida SART Advisory Board** is scheduled for September 2nd at 9:00 a.m. in the auditorium of the Florida Farm Bureau, 5700 SW 34th St., Gainesville, FL 32608 (352) 378-1321. No reservations are required. Please mark your calendars and for questions please contact State ESF-17 Coordinator Joe Kight (kightj@doacs.state.fl.us) or SART’s Michael Turner (turnerm@doacs.state.fl.us) at the Office of Agricultural Emergency Preparedness.



Florida SART’s Michael Turner – on assignment in the Bahamas!



FLASH! Smashing Pumpkins: No threat to US agriculture, but please check your generation gap at the door!

Last Call for This Year's Courses

A few courses remain in the agroterrorism series offered by FDACS' Office of Agricultural Emergency Preparedness and taught by instructors from Western Institute of Food Safety and Security (WIFSS). All courses are **Free**.

AWR-152

Preparedness: Principles of Preparedness for Agroterrorism and Food Systems' Disasters

Tuesday, September 15 in Orlando, FL, AWR 152 Principles of Preparedness for

Agroterrorism and Food Systems' Disasters, 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM at the Orange County

Sheriff's Office Central Operations Center, Mel

Martinez Auditorium, 2500 W. Colonial Drive, Orlando, FL 32804

Wednesday, September 16 in Miami, FL, AWR 152 Principles of Preparedness for Agroterrorism and Food Systems' Disasters, 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM at the FDLE Miami (MROC), in the FDLE Building, Emergency Operations Center, 1030 NW 111th Ave, Miami, FL 33172.

For information, check with the office of Art Johnstone at the Office of Agricultural Emergency Preparedness (850) 410-6758 johnsta@doacs.state.fl.us. Art says that six additional courses are on the drawing board for the October-December quarter; details will be announced shortly.

And don't forget AgERT classes in Alabama! AgERT dates for the balance of 2009 are September 20-25, October 19-24, November 15-20 and December 6-11. For registration information see <http://cdp.dhs.gov>. Contact Gordon Harman for information at Robert.G.Harman@aphis.usda.gov or (256) 231-5632.

Hurricane Season 2009



It has begun for real ... and Ana, Bill and Claudette are on the radar now, though not in that order.

- Claudette, a breezy Tropical Depression, came ashore on the morning of August 17th and is dissipating its light energy package northward of Florida. Gusts of 35 mph and up to 6 inches of rain.
- Ana, another Tropical Depression, might dissipate soon says the National Hurricane Center ... but then again it might not. Stay tuned.
- Bill, officially the first Atlantic hurricane of the 2009 season, appears – based on the latest NHC/NOAA track – to have Cape Hatteras, North Carolina or even New England in its sights.

Although NOAA says the formation of dense tropical storms in the Atlantic is hampered by the presence of El Nino “an abnormal warming of surface ocean waters in the eastern tropical Pacific.” (For more information check <http://kids.earth.nasa.gov/archive/nino/intro.html> ... and don't be intimidated just because it says “kids.”)

With storms actively forming, this is a good time to shake off the languor of several years of lower than anticipated storms and make sure your family, business and pet emergency plans are up-to-date! (The state site at www.floridadisaster.org can help!)

Great Video Explains SART

You will want to take 12 minutes to view the video about SART and the ESF 17 function that is available on the internet through the FDACS web site at:

www.florida-agriculture.com/videos/flash/SART_State_Agricultural_Response_Team_Video.htm

If anyone asks what SART is all about, or about the mission of ESF 17, this is a wonderful place to begin. Informative, but very visual, there is plenty of emergency- and disaster-related footage that demonstrates the need for exactly the kind of training, coordination and communication that an effective SART provides. Not just “talking heads,” although excellent commentary is provided by Dr. Tom Holt, Florida State Veterinarian, FDACS/DAI; Dr. Greg Christy, veterinarian with FDACS/DAI; Dr.

Joan Dusky, assistant dean for extension, UF/IFAS; Tim Manning, Resolution Coordinator, USDA/FSA; and Frankie Hall, Florida Farm Bureau.

Pet-Friendly Sheltering



All disasters are local.
It is the anthem of disaster prevention and response.
How is your county plan coming along?

Here, then, for study and review, perhaps for comparison to your own, is the St. John's County "Pet-Friendly Shelter Procedural Plan" and their "Emergency Housing Registration & Agreement Form." Note that the St. John's plan requires owners to provide cages or carriers and food for their pets and involves them in pet care during their stay at the shelter.

Our thanks to all of those working diligently to provide for emergency pet sheltering plans and to Paul Studivant, Manager - St. Johns County Animal Control - (904) 209-0748 pstudivant@sjcfl.us for allowing us to review some of the results of his hard work. Studivant also credits the Marion County plan.

Safety – The Lighter (or not) Side



“One of the problems with signs is that, although they start life with the best of intentions, conveying important information, they gradually just become part of the landscape, ignored and eventually invisible.

“One of the problems with emergency exits is that you hardly ever have emergencies, and thus you hardly ever need them. Our efficient human brains have this tendency to turn “hardly ever” into “never,” and that is a risky step.

“The plus side of the mess shown above is that if you need to grab a few cleaning products on your way out (assuming you can get out), you’re in good shape.”

www.safetycenter.navy.mil/photo/index.asp

Thanks to Dr. Carol J. Lehtola, Associate Professor
in UF's Dept. of Ag and Biological Engineering

Campfires and Laurel Wilt

The July 31st press release from FDACS was titled “Laurel Wilt Disease Confirmed on Avocado Sample from Homestead.” It is the first confirmed case and it spells bad news for the Florida avocado industry, estimated at \$12.7 million per year with 6,500 groves primarily in Dade County. It also spells trouble for the redbay, sassafras and laurel trees in your yard. (To see a map showing how far and how fast laurel wilt has spread, click

www.doacs.state.fl.us/pi/enpp/pathology/laurel_wilt_disease.html.)

Here is the chain:

- Laurel wilt spreads rapidly via redbay, avocado and laurel trees in Florida.
- The disease is caused by a fungus that prevents water from flowing in trees.
- The fungus is carried by tiny beetle, the redbay ambrosia beetle.

A working group of industry members, agriculture agencies and local agriculture groups is trying to figure out how to “mitigate” [through research, regulation and education <http://trec.ifas.ufl.edu/>] what will surely be a serious problem and could conceivably kill every laurel in Florida and doom the avocado industry.



As with other spreading plant diseases and infestations, the key word is “mitigate,” not “cure.” Like citrus greening, citrus canker or lethal yellowing the disease is undoubtedly permanent now in the southeast.

It is the duty of CAPS, the Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (a combined effort of USDA and FDACS-DPI), to monitor the exotic plant pests and diseases of agricultural and natural plant resources. You will undoubtedly hear more from and about CAPS as laurel wilt spreads.

There’s no cure, so what can be done to slow the beetle’s spread and the death of trees?

1. Watch for signs on your trees. For photos and information visit http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/pi/enpp/pathology/laurel_wilt_disease.html.



Wilt symptoms of redbay attacked by the beetle and infected with laurel wilt. A) Sections of crown turning purple to red. B) Same tree eight months later (May 2006).

2. Use local firewood only. Don’t transport firewood from other states because destructive pests and diseases hitchhike on infested firewood. View the firewood video at <http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/pi/videos.html>.

3. Don't transport host trees (redbay, swamp bay, avocado, sassafras, pondspice, pondberry and others in the laurel family) unless purchased from a registered nursery.
4. If you suspect a tree may be infected contact the DPI helpline at (888) 397-1517.

Snakes on the Plains

You are tramping along surveying damage after a storm – it's hot and humid, electricity is out, supplies are short, fallen trees lie across the road, you are tired and thirsty – and *Bingo!* A huge snake – a python or boa constrictor, but way too large to be a native Florida snake – slithers out of the grass in front of you. What do you do?



SART thanks Pangaea Pets of Gainesville for allowing us to take photos of these young women and the red-tail python.

Well, don't panic. About the #1 exotic reptile of special concern, the Burmese python, the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission web site (http://myfwc.com/NEWSROOM/Resources/News_Resources_PythonPermitFAQs.htm) says "There is a low risk of a human attack."

Indeed, although FWC says that as many as 112,000 of these snakes have been imported into the U.S. since 1990 they are popular with exotic pet owners because they are relatively docile. Nevertheless, their appetite for Florida wildlife is great and they have no natural enemies.

FWC's Captain Linda Harrison [850 488-6253 linda.harrison@myfwc.com] says, "If you come across a large snake and don't know how to handle it ... or how to tell some of the species apart, you probably want to detour around it and report its location to a trained FWC officer or responder. If in an emergency situation you feel that it is appropriate to do so, you should attempt to humanely euthanize it." FWC is a SART partner agency.

Since a two-year-old child was strangled to death by a pet Burmese python in the summer, there has been a great deal of discussion about exotic snakes in Florida. It is believed that the free-ranging exotic snake populations now living in South Florida began when animals escaped following Hurricane Andrew in 1992. Almost certainly, pets have also been released by owners who no longer wished to care for them. Note that FWC holds "Non-native Pet Amnesty Days" throughout the year so that people who can no longer keep or care for a non-native pets can bring them to FWC offices for adoption by licensed recipients.

FWC Talking Points – Burmese python

- The Burmese python is a nonnative species to Florida and to North America.
 - Approximately 112,000 of these Asian snakes have been imported into the United States since 1990.
 - Everglades National Park has been the site of suspected releases of these exotic pets, with population predictions in the tens of thousands. The National Park Service reported the removal of 311 Burmese pythons from the Everglades in 2008.
 - Other pythons have been captured in Big Cypress National Preserve and Collier Seminole State Park, north of the Everglades; areas around Miami to the northeast; Key Largo to the southeast and other lands, both public and private, throughout the region.
- The FWC lists the Burmese python as a Reptile of Concern, which means it has habits that may adversely affect the environment or may be a threat to public safety. Other Reptiles of Concern are the Indian python, reticulated python, African rock python, amethystine or scrub python, green anaconda and Nile monitor lizard.
- As a Reptile of Concern, this python must be licensed by FWC's Captive Wildlife Section in order to be kept as a pet. The license costs \$100 per year and mandates specific caging requirements. Burmese pythons more than 2 inches in diameter must be implanted with a microchip that identifies the animal. This rule applies to all Reptiles of Concern. It is unlawful to allow to escape or to release it into the wild.
- The Burmese python is commonly kept as a pet because it is more docile than other large nonnative constrictors.
- There is a low risk of a human attack. Documented human attacks by pythons in the United States involve the snake's owner or immediate family.
- A recent report from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) shows that the Burmese python could survive throughout Florida. The report states that other factors such as food and shelter need consideration, but the "Burmese pythons and other giant constrictor snakes have shown themselves to be highly adaptable to new environments."
- A non-venomous constrictor, the Burmese python preys on native Florida species of mammals, birds and reptiles, as well as nonnative species including black rats.
- According to the National Park Service, the appetite of the Burmese python poses a serious threat to some of Florida's already endangered species. Burmese pythons have eaten four Key Largo woodrats, a federally endangered species.
- The Burmese python may reach a length of 26 feet and a weight of more than 200 pounds. The largest Burmese python captured in the Everglades was 16 feet and 150 pounds. Its native habitat ranges from India to lower China, throughout the Malay Peninsula and on some islands in the East Indies. It usually lives near water.
- Although semi-aquatic, this snake is a good climber.



Pythons in the wilds of Florida can be very difficult to spot. Can you find the one in this FWC photo?

- Pythons lay eggs, unlike boa constrictors. A female Burmese python may lay 50-100 eggs and will wrap its body around the clutch to keep it warm and to defend the eggs against predators. The female python can raise its temperature by rhythmically twitching muscles which generates heat and helps incubate the eggs. This incubation process may last two to three months. Once the eggs are hatched, baby pythons are on their own to survive.
- The USGS and the Everglades National Park are investigating the behavior and biology of the Burmese python to get a better understanding of the snake's requirements for survival. Their findings also assess the risk of invasion into other areas of the United States.
- Further information may be found on FWC's Web site at MyFWC.com/nonnatives. To see the complete report from USGS, go to www.usgs.com.

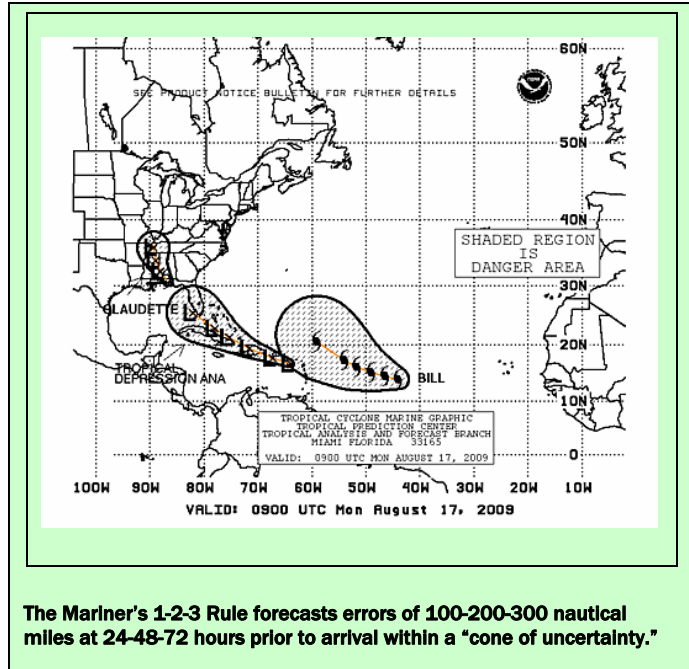
In a related note: According to a recent news story, a man who claimed to have captured a 14-foot python in a Manatee County drain pipe last month has acknowledged faking it. Justin Matthews, who owns an "animal care and educational company," confessed to state investigators that he purchased the snake legally and then staged its capture.

The Mariner's 1-2-3 Rule

As a responder you may be asked about the "Mariner's 1-2-3 Rule." According to the National Hurricane Center, the rule, or "Danger area," is indicated by shading. Commonly taught to mariners, the 1-2-3 Rule refers to the rounded long-term NHC forecast errors of 100-200-300 nautical miles at 24-48-72 hours, respectively. The map contour defining the shaded area is constructed by accounting for those errors and then broadened further to reflect the maximum tropical storm force (34 knot) wind radii forecast at each of those times by the NHC. **The NHC, by the way, does not warrant that avoiding these danger areas will eliminate the risk of harm from tropical cyclones.**

Users operating in the vicinity of these systems are advised to continually monitor the latest Forecast/Advisories from the NHC and proceed at their own risk. Areas are also shaded for systems in which NHC forecasters believe there is an adequate chance of tropical cyclone formation within the next 48 hours.

[And to convert knots to mph, multiply knots – abbreviated “kts” – by 1.15077945 ... or as many of those digits as you can remember, typically 1.15!]



A Question of Resources and Priorities

One of the huge number of questions we are faced with in the response community – both at the planning stage and at the “Help!” stage – is how to stretch a limited amount of resources, a limited number of staff and volunteers over what must sometimes seem to be an unlimited need.

This particular question manifests in not-so-subtle ways following a disaster. How does a finite, publicly-funded shelter cope with the thousands of animals that need assistance: how many dogs to help, how many cats, what about rats and snakes, how many to feed, what breeds to save after a “reasonable” period (does an easily-adoptable Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, for instance, have preference over a mutt or a pit bull?). In a litigious society that often seems prone to second-guessing rather than counting its blessings, these and a myriad of other questions need to be discussed and perhaps adopted as a matter of public policy before an emergency.

Here are two interesting and perhaps eternally arguable cases involving marine wildlife. Not to second-guess ... only to use for discussion. Would the effort and results have been the same had the humpback been, for instance, a whale shark? With the increased publicity given to saving sharks from slaughter, did anyone consider that the sharks “attacking” the dolphin were simply hungry? This kind of effort is terribly expensive; assuming the cost was borne by private funds, were they nevertheless the best way to spend scarce monies?

The Whale: December 11, 2005

A 45-foot female humpback whale entangled in hundreds of pounds of crab traps and lines struggles to stay afloat. One of the lines tugs in her mouth.

A crab fisherman spots her near the Farallon Islands, west of San Francisco, and radios for help. A rescue team arrives within hours and determines the only way to save her is to dive in the water and untangle her. It would be very dangerous. One slap of the animal's tail could kill a rescuer.

The rescue team works for hours with curved knives and eventually frees her.

Once free, the divers say the whale swam in circles, coming to each diver, one at a time, and nudged them gently. The divers assumed she was thanking them and some said it was the most incredibly beautiful experience of their lives. The man who cut the rope out of the whale's mouth says her eye followed him the whole time and that he will never be the same.

(This scenario was recently passed along by email from friends who may have read it on line at www.snopes.com/critters/crusader/whalethanks.asp.)



The Dolphin: July 28, 2009

Jeni Hatter, spokesperson for the Clearwater Marine Aquarium, says "Dunham," an Atlantic bottlenose dolphin, was released after eight months in rehab recovering from pneumonia. She said experts nearby were monitoring the juvenile male mammal

with a VHF radio transmitter.

The dolphin almost immediately attracted sharks that "attacked" it twice. Hatter said the mammal "had to be euthanized" just hours after "he" was released into the Gulf of Mexico.

Please share your thoughts with others in the response community.

Thoughtfully
The Editor

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.