

AVMA Disaster Update # 25  
(To be posted at [www.avma.org/disaster](http://www.avma.org/disaster))  
(This information is subject to change as additional information becomes available)

Event: Hurricane Katrina  
Date: September 23, 2005  
Situation: AVMA Hurricane Katrina Disaster Situation Report

**AVMA Veterinary Medical Assistance Team (VMAT) Update:**

**VMAT-1: Louisiana and VMAT-5: Louisiana**

Members of VMAT-1 in Baton Rouge, LA are under tornado warnings today and are being relocated to safer locations as this report is being prepared.

VMAT Comments from LA...

I was the veterinarian in charge of the veterinary hospital at Lamar-Dixon.

Everyone was aware that humane organizations were in charge of the healthy shelter animals, and that VMAT was in charge of the animals that needed veterinary care. The US Public Health Service (PHS) was in charge of triage, and triage was going on whenever it was needed. Sometimes we would be there until midnight triaging the animals that were arriving from New Orleans.....unloading the crates from the trucks, bathing the animals, deciding which ones had to be hospitalized, etc. We didn't stop the triage process until ALL of the animals had been looked at.

Animals did not sit waiting for veterinary care. All sick animals were placed either in our ICU unit or in our hospital unit. All outpatient care was administered by a VMAT-5 veterinarian. I set into place the system that allowed shelter volunteers to come to us to request veterinary care from VMAT. The volunteers would fill out a shelter vet request form and place that request in an "in box" that was next to the blank request forms. We had VMAT doctors and veterinary volunteers who were working with VMAT who were responsible for triaging those requests, and I personally monitored those requests to make sure that ALL the animals were getting the care that they needed.

VMAT -1 and VMAT-5 did a stellar job of managing that veterinary facility. My staff just like everyone else was working sometimes 14 hours a day in 95 degree heat with a 110+ heat index.

We were responsible for the health and well being of hundreds of animals, many of whom were deathly ill. We had to make life and death decisions on a daily basis about animals that had managed to survive 2-3 weeks without food and water. We had to deal on a daily basis with people who had lost everything and were now looking and sometimes finding their pets in our care.

We set up a complete field hospital in a very short period of time. We worked very closely with the Humane Society of the U.S. (HSUS) in dealing with the severely aggressive animals and making decisions on humane euthanasia when that was indicated. We worked very closely with the US PHS in attempting to reduce the number

of human bite and scratch injuries. We were responsible for finally getting an air conditioned comfort tent set up for anyone at the facility to use if needed.

The biggest feather in our cap came when the director of the NDMS (National Disaster Medical System) came to inspect our veterinary facility and left with tears in his eyes as he was so impressed with what we had managed to accomplish at Lamar-Dixon.

### **VMAT-2: Mississippi**

VMAT-2 has begun to mobilize to help the efforts in LA. Three team members arrived in Baton Rouge on 9/22 to augment the VMAT-1 efforts, and two additional VMAT-2 members will arrive on Sunday. Other team members are packed and ready to deploy to the area of need at any time.

### **VMAT-3: Mississippi**

#### **Update from Bill Miller, VMAT-3 Acting Team Commander**

Friday morning: it's rainy and windy, but no severe weather. We're in Hattiesburg, Miss. 21 members on the team ... 5-person strike team in Waveland, Hancock County, providing animal emergency clinic/shelter support with HSUS.

Today we developed an evacuation plan for all personnel in Hattiesburg, in the event the storm veers East.

Many new animals came in yesterday: horses, donkeys, and several dogs. Not too many are going out. Population is around 800 animals now. We're providing medical and emergency care support at the Hattiesburg Shelter, along with Mississippi State Board of Animal Health; Mississippi State Veterinarian's Office; Incident Management Team (NC-SART); HSUS; and a logistical support team from California. Several hundred people working there.

Yesterday afternoon, Hancock County officials instituted a voluntary evacuation. HSUS wanted to move all animals out of the shelter in Waveland. We assisted with final triage and loading of animals for transport to the large shelter in Hattiesburg. The Waveland strike team is on its way back to Hattiesburg.

Entire VMAT-3 team will be in Hattiesburg until we find out what Rita will do ... then we'll send out an assessment team to Gulfport/Biloxi and Waveland in an attempt to reestablish the shelter in Waveland.

This completes the VMAT operational update for 9/23/05

### **AVMA Report:**

#### **Animals in Public Shelters**

*The following document will be available at [www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org) and was developed by consultation between the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Veterinary Medical Association and is advisory in nature. Guidance reflects information available as of September 22, 2005 and may be updated as additional information becomes available.*

[www.petfinder.com](http://www.petfinder.com)

To register a Lost or Found animal

To provide a foster home for animals

To register a veterinary facility(s) willing to foster or provide medical care

To volunteer

## 1) Volunteers to Help in Disaster Relief

Veterinarians, Technicians, and others can sign up to volunteer in the disaster response at [www.petfinder.com](http://www.petfinder.com).

The Department of Health and Human Services has established a website <https://volunteer.hhs.gov> and toll-free number (1-866-KATMEDI) to help identify health care professionals and relief personnel to assist in Hurricane Katrina relief efforts.

The US Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Inspection Service is looking for volunteers (veterinarians, veterinary technicians and assistants, veterinary students) to assist in recovery efforts and in future natural and animal disease emergencies. Send an email to [EmergencyVMO@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:EmergencyVMO@aphis.usda.gov) with the subject line "New NAHERC Volunteer" for more information on how you can get involved.

## 2) Temporary Housing/Employment Opportunities for Veterinarians and Veterinary Staff

In an effort to assist veterinarians, veterinary technicians and other veterinary staff affected by Hurricane Katrina, AVMA is establishing a list of people and clinics willing to offer temporary employment and/or housing to these displaced individuals. These offers will be posted online.

In addition, AVMA wants to establish a database of displaced veterinarians, veterinary technicians and veterinary staff so we can start assisting these individuals with finding temporary employment or housing.

If you would be interested in offering temporary employment/housing or are a displaced veterinary related individual and want to be added to our lists, email us at [vetcareers@avma.org](mailto:vetcareers@avma.org) or call Cindy Coy at 1-800-248-2862 ext 6683. Please put **Katrina** in the subject line and give us your full name, phone number and email address (if possible) and we will contact you for more information.

We have had contact with several of the veterinary state boards in all of the states and some of the Canadian provinces and have received back about 25 responses with information regarding licensure requirements for hiring displaced veterinarians. We are encouraging the State Veterinary Medical Associations to work with their corresponding Veterinary State Boards to establish guidelines for temporary employment requirements so that you may better inform your members before they extend an employment offer. The AVMA website will also provide the information we have received from our inquiries and it will be updated daily. It is our understanding that the AAVSB has pledged to waive any score report fees for purposes of licensure in other states.

**If you are a state who has already established a temporary employment job board, please send us a link to your site so we are not duplicating your efforts.**

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AVMA's disaster preparedness booklet *Saving the Whole Family* is available at [http://www.avma.org/disaster/saving\\_family.asp](http://www.avma.org/disaster/saving_family.asp). Full text available for free from the Web site.

The VMAT efforts are made possible from an annual grant from the **American Veterinary Medical Foundation (AVMF)**. The AVMF just approved a \$100,000 grant to support immediate VMAT needs in the Hurricane Katrina Response. Those interested in contributing to the Animal Disaster Relief and Response Fund can send a check to the American Veterinary Medical Foundation, Department 20-1122, P.O. Box 5940, Carol Stream, IL 60197, with "Animal Disaster Relief and Response Fund" written on the check's note section. Online donations are accepted at [www.avmf.org](http://www.avmf.org).

#### **Texas Veterinary Medical Association**

To post or search available veterinary jobs and housing...

TVMA CONNECT is a new online forum designed to enhance communication between members of the veterinary profession, especially during this time of need. To post information or get the latest updates concerning hurricane relief, visit [www.tvmaconnect.org](http://www.tvmaconnect.org).

#### **Mississippi Animal Relief Fund**

(662) 324-9380

Through Mississippi Veterinary Medical Association

#### **Contact Information for MS Animal Rescue Needs**

To report a lost or found animal call: 1-888-722-3106 (8am-6pm daily)

Pet finder -- [www.petfinder.com](http://www.petfinder.com)

HSUS --1-800-HUMANE-1

The **LSU Emergency Animal Shelter in the Parker Coliseum** will not accept new pets after September 30, 2005 and the operation will close on October 15, 2005.

If possible, owners should pick up their animals by September 30 or give consent for adoption. If owners wish to give their pet up for adoption, they should call 225-578-6111; if owners wish to arrange for long-term fostering for their pet, they should come by the Parker Coliseum shelter or go to <http://www.petfinder.com>.

Pets remaining in the shelter after September 30, 2005, will be considered "abandoned." Some of these pets will be adopted out to new owners locally in Baton Rouge and remaining animals will be transported to shelters in other areas of the U.S. for subsequent adoption. All animals adopted out will be photographed for identification purposes and the image will be placed on Petfinder.com (<http://www.petfinder.com>).

Records of transportation and adoption will be kept so that owners can trace down the location of their pets. All adoptions will be on a provisional basis for at least 30 days, allowing owners to reclaim their pets. For shelter news, visit the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine's web site (<http://www.vetmed.lsu.edu/>).

### **Animal Rescue--Two Weeks in Mississippi**

The Horse.com

*by: Kimberly S. Herbert, Editor*

September 2005 Article # 6154

Tomas Gimenez, Dr.Med.Vet, is a professor of animal and veterinary sciences at Clemson University, an instructor in emergency and disaster planning and rescue (along with his wife, Rebecca, PhD, a Major in the US Army Reserves mobilized to Active Duty this year), and a member of the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Veterinary Medical Assistance Team 2 (VMAT-2) that was deployed under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to Mississippi in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. He is also new dog owner. "Tupelo" traveled home from Mississippi to South Carolina with Gimenez as a happy example of one of the many stories of animals saved in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. [See Tupelo and other Mississippi rescue photos here.](#)

"We were searching for animals one day and ran into the Tupelo, Miss., Rescue Squad doing house-to-house searches (for people and animals)," said Gimenez. The rescue squad and police noticed there appeared to be mud that was moving just as we (the VMAT-2 team) pulled up. This poor dog was buried in mud and wrapped in power lines, but he was alive. There's no way to know how many days he'd been there; he was skin and bones. Between police officers and rescue workers and us, we put in quite a bit of time with our water bottles and gave him a bath and took him in. Everyone got pretty attached to that dog.

"I ended up adopting him and brought him home," said Gimenez. "His name is Tupelo. We will be searching the Internet lost and found pet sites to see if we can find his true owners, meanwhile he is getting his injuries (pierced prepuce, lacerations) and starvation treated. If we never find his owners, he will have a good home with us on our farm."

### **VMAT-2 At The Ready**

As a professor at Clemson University, Gimenez works in the animal and veterinary science departments. He teaches equine management, equine theriogenology (reproduction), and endocrinology, but about 60% of his time is devoted to working on area of horses in disasters and accidents. He gives training in technical aspects of large animal emergency rescue.

Gimenez became involved in emergency large animal rescue about 12 years ago after attending a seminar on horses in disaster with the South Carolina assistant state veterinarian. The conference was put on by Richard Mansmann, VMD, PhD, of Central Carolina Equine Practice in Chapel Hill, N.C. "We thought it would be a good idea to do

something about that in South Carolina," recalled Gimenez. "We wanted to try to educate horse owners and emergency responders in what to do when large animals get involved in emergencies or disasters. That's how I started. It's evolved from there."

Gimenez and his wife have been teaching a large animal rescue course for about 10 years. He said it started as one-day presentation, and now it is a three-day, hands-on class.

Asked how he got involved with the medical assistance teams, Gimenez said, "I knew of the VMATs existence for a few years, and I just thought it would be a good thing to do since I was working in that area. My wife and I have been members of VMAT for five years now."

He said his team was previously deployed to assist in the avian influenza outbreak in Virginia. He said the team's job was essentially surveillance and working with the local poultry farms to prevent spread of the virus.

At the end of July, the entire team attended a Field Training Exercise in conjunction with their military compatriots on the Special Medical Assistance Team--Veterinary (SMART-V) at Ft. Bragg, N.C. Their mock scenario included actual decontamination of live "police" horses and military working dogs (see photos and article on this training at [www.TheHorse.com/emaq.aspx?id=6153](http://www.TheHorse.com/emaq.aspx?id=6153)).

### **Duty Calls: Hurricane Katrina**

Then came Hurricane Katrina. Gimenez said his VMAT-2 team was on call for August, and he happened to be on the deployment list of 21 for the first two-week rotation of deployment (out of 60 team members). That meant he was one of the first animal rescuers into the hurricane-stricken area of Mississippi. The teams usually have four to five equine veterinarians, six to seven small animal veterinarians, and a dozen or so vet techs and support personnel.

Here's how it works, according to Gimenez: "FEMA activates you, and you become a federal employee. In this case we all went to Atlanta and met; we flew in from all different states, but mostly Mid-Atlantic states. We took rental vans to Anniston, Ala., where FEMA has their Southeastern headquarters. From there we loaded vans with supplies and food and water and drove to Biloxi, Miss. We got there about three days after the hurricane."

The VMAT's mission is: "To support the local veterinary community in whatever way necessary to help it to resume its normal support of the community. VMAT has the capability of setting up a full field hospital, and they can provide medical care for pets, search and rescue dogs, livestock, wildlife, and even zoo animals if the need arises. The teams may also be activated to assist with food safety concerns, zoonotic disease, terrorist events, and toxicological problems."

The AVMA explains how the teams work: "VMATs are the only response teams recognized in the National Response Plan that provide veterinary medical treatment and address animal and public health issues resulting from natural, man-made, or any other type of disasters. VMATs are available to assist the USDA in the control, treatment, and

eradication of animal disease outbreaks. VMATs must receive an invitation from the affected state in order to be deployed. The local governor may make a disaster declaration and submit a request for federal assistance. If the President then declares a disaster, federal resources are made available. It is at this point that a request for VMAT assistance can be made. If a state alone requests a VMAT, they will need to fund the response. If a Federal Disaster is declared, the Federal Government covers a large part of the cost."

Each VMAT team consists of large and small animal veterinarians and veterinary technicians. Specialists can be added as needed. They treat all domestic animals, including cats, dogs, horses, cows, pigs, and birds; anything that people keep as pets.

The VMATs are an AVMA program until deployment, at which time the members become temporary federal employees of the Department of Homeland Security. It should be noted that if it weren't for the American Veterinary Medical Foundation (AVMF) monies that support VMATs, the teams would not have had the supplies they needed to respond after Hurricane Katrina.

To support VMATs, animals, and veterinarians affected by this disaster, donations can be made online at [www.avmf.org](http://www.avmf.org). The AVMA is matching up to \$500,000 in donations.

### **Arriving in Mississippi**

When VMAT-2 arrived in Mississippi, all FEMA workers were based at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi. The Air Force base made room for FEMA personnel, said Gimenez. "We went there to sleep," he explained. "We'd go out on missions every day and spend night at the Air Force base.

"By time we got there, there was still a lot of damage, but the roads had been mostly cleared so you could drive around," reported Gimenez. "They'd been cleared except for Highway 90 that was closed right on the beach."

Gimenez said his team had six vans with supplies and personnel, and during the first days they split the groups into assessment teams that worked by grids. "We covered pretty much the coast of Mississippi from Biloxi to the Louisiana state line," Gimenez said. "We took a map and divided it into sections and started covering different areas every day to determine animal issues and who needed assistance."

Gimenez said there were quite a few people remaining, except in those parts of the towns where neighborhoods were wiped out. "They were non-inhabited," he said.

"Before we went to find out what kind of animal problems there were, the urban search and rescue teams had done a search of houses to look for human victims," Gimenez recalled. "When they found animals alive or dead, they let us know, and we would go assist.

"We also had list of vet clinics on coast of Mississippi," he said, adding that they created the list from local phone books. "We made a point to visit every clinic to get information on what happened to the vets and animals. Were there any live animals left? From those different sources of information we started finding out where live animals were that need

assistance and food and water, and where there were dead animals. We also had a list of animal shelters made up the same way. There were some good stories and some sad stories."

Without going into detail, Gimenez said it was sad that in many cases, people left animals behind--dogs and cats--in animal shelters near the coast. "Our work consisted many times of recovering dead animals," he reported. Much of their decontamination practice a month before at the Field Training Exercise came in handy--having to put on protective gear and breathing apparatus to go into animal facilities and bring out body bags with carcasses for disposal.

Most damage was caused by the combination of wind and water. "Some places the wind wiped out everything, including power lines, and uprooted big trees," he said. "A lot of damage also was due to water. A lot of buildings were standing and we'd go in and everything was destroyed by water.

"People that had lived there all their lives never thought it would be that bad," Gimenez said. "There were vet clinics that were wiped out. One vet inhaled so much water he had pneumonia. A horse vet was holding onto a tree to save his life and had many cuts and bruises."

The VMAT-2 team also found a lot of stray animals, mostly dogs and cats, "and part of our mission was to bring food and water and leave it there for the animals. Our job was not to pick up live animals. We would find out where loose dogs and cats were and notify HSUS (the Humane Society of the United States), and they would go pick them up."

Team members did a few rescues of injured or trapped animals. He said there were a lot of loose cows and horses. "Most of them were okay except for some horses with medical problems with skin lesions and dermatitis and fungal infections," reported Gimenez. "At least they had plenty of grass so they had something to eat even though they were loose. There was water. Some of the water was contaminated, but livestock can drink it at levels that humans cannot.

"I had never been in a hurricane area like that before," said Gimenez. "Devastation was all over. Houses tossed like match boxes. Boats in the middle of road. Cars everywhere. By time we left (Monday Sept. 12), power had been restored mostly. There were no red lights until then."

Asked about the violence of New Orleans by those displaced and homeless, Gimenez said the people in Mississippi "were amazing. We had been hearing lots of stories of violence in Louisiana, but we saw none of that. They had a good sense of humor. You needed to if you'd lost everything."

He said in towns, the people drove very carefully because there were no traffic lights or signs. "They were patient standing in long lines for food. People would stand in line all day to get food from the Red Cross or Army," he said.

As far as the horses, Gimenez reported that, "Fortunately, what we saw was most of the people who had horses had evacuated with the horses. We saw number of farms where barns were destroyed and flattened. We did see a couple of cases where horses had

been in mud, but they were alive. We had to give them a bath and treat them for skin infections. A lot of people evacuated their horses to Hattiesburg, Miss., and Baton Rouge in Louisiana."

The animals that lived seemed to have weathered the storm fairly well. "We saw a few cases of injuries," said Gimenez. "I'm sure there were horses that perished."

He said after the storm many areas were inaccessible by vehicles, so mounted police units from other areas came in to keep looters at bay and take control of outlying areas. Gimenez said several of the police horses had leg and hoof injuries from stepping on debris--pieces of wood and nails.

He said on the coast, the best thing he saw was that horse people had evacuated and taken the horses. "That's the best thing they could do," he re-iterated. "Once you got north of Interstate 10, although there was some devastation, there were some farms where horses were there and okay, but trees had fallen. Still, they had grass and water."

Injuries there from wind and water included a lactating mare with an injury to her mammary gland, which resulted in the loss of that side of the mammary gland (see accompanying photo). "We saw a couple of cases of pneumonia because of the water," said Gimenez. "We shipped those horses to Hattiesburg, where there were appropriate facilities for treating them."

While the VMAT-2 group had good supplies, Gimenez said in hindsight it would have been nice to have a truck with a stocked vet box. "We were driving in vans with limited medical supplies for horses," he said. "If we'd had a truck with a vet box that was fully equipped, we would have been able to do more things than we did. We were in areas where the equine veterinarian was injured or had lost his practice. People there had horses with normal needs that horse people have everywhere. They needed vaccines. They had lame horses. But no one was around to provide veterinary assistance."

The cache of supplies for the VMAT teams took several days to deliver due to the blocked roads and downed power lines on the roadways.

"We did the best we could," he concluded.

After VMAT-2 was in Mississippi four or five days, they set up a field hospital in Gulfport for people to bring in animals--mainly small animals. They had a phone by then, so horse owners could come or call team members and they would go in a van to the horse and try to help.

"The main thing--the most important thing--is if you are a horse owner and live on the coast and you know you are going to get hit sooner or later, have a good evacuation plan," encouraged Gimenez. "If you know the hurricane is coming, don't wait. Don't try to be a hero and ride out the storm with the horses; that's where the tragedy is going to strike. Have a good evacuation plan and get out of there."

## **Disaster Training for Veterinarians Pays Off**

by: Kimberly S. Herbert, Editor

The Horse.com

September 2005 Article # 6153

So how do veterinarians who teach school, give dogs rabies shots, and work on lame horses get ready for something like Hurricane Katrina? These folks don't work in HAZMAT suits in their normal jobs. Most have never been in situations where there are contaminants that could affect their lives.

As in all other aspects of their lives, veterinarians who work in disaster and rescue have specialized training. Fortunately for those animals and people left in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, some veterinarians had been given hands-on training in dealing with hazardous situations, including decontamination of large and small animals. Following is a report from that training...

From July 31 thru Aug. 1, ten members of the U.S. Army East Coast SMART-V (Special Medical Assessment Team-Veterinary) and 50 VMAT (Veterinary Medical Assistance Team) team members conducted a mock deployment and animal decontamination field training exercise (FTX) at Ft. Bragg, NC. Mr. Gomes, Chief, Ambulance Service, Womack Army Medical Center, and members of DMAT-1 NC provided HAZMAT and DECON support and training for the exercise, and Dr. Michael Fielder of the Ft. Bragg Veterinary Services Branch coordinated logistical support of the exercise, a monumental feat.

Their training goals emphasized individual deployment to a field location; transportation and deployment of items from the VMAT Federal Cache of equipment and training aids; logistical preparedness; establishing a field bivouac and field Veterinary Hospital; promoting inter-operability and command/control between the various teams; and practicing the Incident Command System and communication capabilities.

The exercise specifically focused on the practice of hands-on procedures and techniques for triage and decontamination of large and small animals in a simulated Hazardous Materials (HAZMAT) exposure scenario response. This was intended to be a familiarization level exercise to allow teams to learn each other's capabilities (assessment, expertise, manpower, equipment, etc.) and to identify shortages and equipment needs.

The first evening, teams worked together to unload the cache of equipment and raised 5 large shelter tents for sleeping, eating and a field hospital and then lived in the field environment on MREs for the FTX. They attended training in Base of Operations, Hazardous Materials, The decontamination teams practiced with mock stuffed animals to get their procedures and techniques down, and then began gross decontamination of live military working dogs, a llama and 3 horses. Members realized how important having the right equipment,

The global war on terror continues to present the possibility of attack to the agricultural infrastructure of the United States. Recent events in Great Britain and Egypt demonstrate that Al-Quiada and other terrorist groups are again focusing on coalition targets outside of the Middle East and Southeast Asia. In the event of another attack on

U.S. soil, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and certain elements of the Department of Defense will likely work close together in handling this situation. Biologic agent events, specifically agro-terrorism, remain a likely approach of terrorist attack on this country. All agencies and animal health organizations must be prepared to work closely together in the event of such an incident to prevent or respond to the situation in an efficient and safe manner. (In fact, Louisiana State University offers a course to veterinarians, emergency management and other animal health professionals at [http://www.in.gov/dhs/training/ag\\_terror.pdf](http://www.in.gov/dhs/training/ag_terror.pdf) )

The VMAT teams are part of the National Disaster Medical System under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) tasked under Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Originally made up of volunteer veterinarians and veterinary technicians, they now are considered deployable on-demand federal employees. Their mission is to provide veterinary medical care, food and water safety assessment, disease surveillance to protect both animal health and public health, animal decontamination, and to assist in animal euthanasia and carcass disposal. They work with other humane and animal rescue organizations to coordinate rescue and sheltering of individual animals, but normally do not perform animal rescue missions.

VMAT members have been deployed to real-world missions after the New York Twin Towers disaster and the avian influenza concern in Virginia, and they have provided veterinary medical support to the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR), Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms (ATF), and Secret Service canine and equine teams at staged events (Olympics, Republican and Democratic National Conventions and Presidential inauguration). Members of VMAT-1, 2, and 3 and SMART-V flew or drove in from all over the country to attend this field training exercise.

The SMART-V Teams are a made up of soldiers from Veterinary Command (VETCOM) of the US Army with a mission of providing assessment and augmentation to civilian and military authorities during natural disasters, Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosive (CBRNE) Events, or agricultural terror crisis.

It is important that training deployments of VMAT and SMART-V teams be accomplished, simulating real-world conditions of minimal resources, operational intensity, and working under degrading environmental influences. Since the VMAT members are civilians, they do not get the opportunity to practice field operational conditions except once a year during training exercises.

The exercise met all of its mission objectives, and in some areas exceeded expectations of the team leaders. All of the team members and leaders felt that the quality of the training and the lessons learned will provide excellent building blocks for the foundation of future joint training exercises and at levels of increasing complexity. It is expected that this exercise will lead to annual joint training exercises to further promote the interoperability between federal and military veterinary assets and be used as a model for other joint ventures between military and federal teams of similar types.

Update: 15 September 2005. This exercise was crucial to preparing the VMAT teams for their deployment to all areas of the Hurricane Katrina Disaster zone. In some cases they had to put on HAZMAT suits and breathing apparatus to remove dead animals from facilities. All the team members lived in the field in tents and ate MREs on their

deployment, without AC or electricity for several days. Preparedness, training and practice paid off!