

## **AVMA Disaster Update # 1**

*(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 Rita  
**Date:** September 23, 2005  
**Situation:** AVMA Hurricane Rita Disaster Situation Report

### **PalmBeachPost.com Storm 2005 Advisory**

**National Hurricane Center – Miami, FL**

1 pm - September 23, 2005

...Rita on a slow weakening trend...

A hurricane warning is in effect from port O'Connor Texas to Morgan City Louisiana. A hurricane warning means that hurricane conditions are expected within the warning area within the next 24 hours. Preparations to protect life and property should be rushed to completion.

A tropical storm warning remains in effect for the southeastern coast of Louisiana east of Morgan City to the mouth of the Pearl River including metropolitan New Orleans and Lake Pontchartrain ...and from south of Port O'Connor to Port Aransas. A tropical storm warning means that tropical storm conditions are expected within the warning area within the next 24 hours.

At 1 pm CDT the center of hurricane Rita was located about 190 miles southeast of Galveston Texas and about 175 miles southeast of Port Arthur Texas.

Rita is moving toward the northwest near 10 mph and this motion is expected to continue during the next 24 hours. On this track...the core of Rita will make landfall near the southwest Louisiana and upper Texas coasts early Saturday.

Maximum sustained winds have decreased to near 125 mph with higher gusts. Rita is now a Category Three Hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson scale. A further slow weakening is possible before landfall...but Rita is still expected to come ashore as a dangerous hurricane.

Hurricane force winds extend outward up to 85 miles from the center...and tropical storm force winds extend outward up to 205 miles.

Coastal storm surge flooding of 15 feet above normal tide levels... Locally up to 20 feet at head of bays and nearby rivers...with large and dangerous battering waves...can be expected near and to the east of where the center makes landfall. Tides are currently running about 2 feet above normal along the Louisiana...Mississippi and Alabama coasts in the areas affected by Katrina. Tides in those areas will increase to 3 to 5 feet and be accompanied by large waves...and residents there could experience coastal flooding. Large swells generated by Rita will likely affect most portions of the gulf coast.

Rita is expected to produce rainfall accumulations of 8 to 12 inches...with isolated

maximum amounts of 20 inches over southeastern Texas and southwestern Louisiana as it moves inland. Rainfall amounts of 3 to 5 inches are possible over southeastern Louisiana including metropolitan new Orleans with isolated heavier amounts possible. Since Rita is forecast to slow down significantly after making landfall...total accumulations in excess of 25 inches are possible over the next several days across eastern Texas into western Louisiana.

Isolated tornadoes are possible today over portions of southeastern Texas...southern Louisiana including southern Mississippi and Alabama.

Forecaster Avila

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

National Disaster Medical System (NDMS): Announcement  
All NDMS teams and all available personnel to check in with team leadership and post availability. NDMS has staged 19 elements including teams and support equipment for Hurricane "RITA".

### **American Veterinary Medical Foundation (AVMF)**

The VMAT efforts are made possible from an annual grant from the AVMF. 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 Emergency Management: Announcement**

Any calls received from the public concerning shelters or assistance for Hurricane Rita evacuees may be forwarded to:

Emergency Management Office  
979-821-9389

Emergency Operation Center  
979-361-4140 or 4141

### **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

## **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.

## **Temporary Housing/Employment Opportunities for Veterinarians and 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.**

Dr. Kimberly Rudloff  
Assistant Director, Membership and Field Services, ext. 6679  
[krudloff@avma.org](mailto:krudloff@avma.org)

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.

### **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).

### **USDA PREPARES FOR HURRICANE RITA**

USDA Highlights Assistance to Regions Affected by Hurricane Katrina

WASHINGTON Sept. 22, 2005 - Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns today said USDA has deployed personnel and resources to assist the efforts by federal, state and local authorities in preparation prior to Hurricane Rita's landfall.

"As Hurricane Rita approaches, USDA personnel are preparing to provide food and water, emergency housing and other resources to the region," said Johanns. "Even as we stand ready to assist with Rita, we continue to closely coordinate with many partners to meet the immediate and long-term needs of those affected by Hurricane Katrina."

USDA Forest Service incident command teams, in coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Texas Department of Emergency Management, are in San Antonio, Texas helping the evacuees who are relocating from the Texas coast. USDA has staged an incident management team in Dallas, Texas that is ready to deploy once Hurricane Rita makes landfall.

When Rita hit the Florida Keys, USDA commodities were provided to shelters in the Homestead and Lakeland areas and are being used for congregate meal service. The USDA Food and Nutrition Service is working with Texas officials to assess commodity and baby food needs in order to redirect and purchase commodities to fulfill the anticipated need. Inventories within the state and in surrounding states have been identified and are being prepositioned for distribution into affected areas. Household size commodities such as rice, fruits, vegetables, meats, juices, cereal and ultra-high temperature milk, have been ordered for the cities of Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, Austin, Ft. Worth, Lubbock, Beaumont and Tyler to replace depleted inventories from Texas' service to Katrina evacuees. Institutional size commodities have been ordered for anticipated congregate feeding sites in the cities of Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, Austin, Ft. Worth, Lubbock and Beaumont. Additionally, infant formula and infant foods have been ordered for immediate shipment to Texas and additional infant formula is being re-routed from unneeded inventories in Louisiana.

As with Hurricane Katrina, USDA Rural Development is preparing a complete inventory of USDA-financed facilities in the area most likely to be impacted by the landfall of Hurricane Rita. This includes properties financed through USDA's Community Facilities, Housing and Business programs. Additionally, USDA is communicating with partners including electrical coops, telecommunications providers and the Texas Rural Water Association to implement existing disaster recovery plans that USDA has required to be

in place. USDA also has conducted an inventory of available housing units that could be used by families displaced by the hurricane.

The USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service is helping consumers prepare for Hurricane Rita by providing critical food safety information to city officials, public school officials, grocery store contacts, nutrition offices, community colleges, city and town health and environmental inspectors. Additionally, USDA has sent food safety public service announcements to media outlets in Texas and Louisiana to give direction about how to prevent food borne illness once families return to their homes.

While USDA prepares for Hurricane Rita, Katrina response efforts continue. To date, USDA has provided the following personnel and resources:

**Personnel and Resources Deployed to Region -** USDA has over 4,000 employees deployed into the affected region, providing services to military, state, local and federal agencies. Specifically, a large portion of those employees are from USDA's Forest Service, which is utilizing its incident management abilities by managing evacuation centers and base camps, providing logistical support, clearing roadways and operating mobilization centers and trailer staging areas. To date, Forest Service Incident Management Teams have helped provide over 600,000 people with commodities, 2.7 million meals have been shipped and 4 million gallons of water and 40 million pounds of ice have been distributed to the affected communities.

**Food Assistance -** USDA continues delivering food and facilitating delivery of nutrition assistance programs in affected states and host states across the country. To date, in Louisiana and Texas alone over 428,000 displaced households have been signed up for over \$151 million in food stamp benefits. In addition, more than 15 million pounds of commodities and baby foods have been ordered for affected states. National Evacuee Policies remain in effect for all states to streamline processing and expedite services for evacuees applying for the Food Stamp, School Meals and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, better known as WIC, Programs.

**Food Safety -** Sponsored by the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), the Food Safety Mobile was re-routed to help with the Hurricane Katrina relief effort. The Mobile began the campaign to educate as many people as possible about the unique and specific food safety challenges that residents along the Gulf Coast will face as a result of Hurricane Katrina. The Mobile has made several stops in Mississippi to visit consumers and will then travel to several locations each in Louisiana and Alabama. A schedule of upcoming Food Safety Mobile events is available at [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/food\\_safety\\_education/Mobile\\_Events\\_by\\_Date/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/food_safety_education/Mobile_Events_by_Date/index.asp). FSIS continues to provide information about how to keep food safe during power outages. A series of public service messages have been issued throughout the affected region. Consumers can call the toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline 24 hours a day at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854); for the hearing-impaired (TTY) 1-800-256-7072.

**Housing and Community Assistance -** To date, USDA's Rural Development has placed almost 5,000 evacuees in over 1,500 available housing units in 19 states, provided almost 23,000 families with temporary loan forbearance agreements on their mortgage payments, and received over 3,500 calls for assistance from affected residents. To speed the process of helping those affected by the hurricane, USDA has placed employees in the field with wireless Internet laptops to assist victims in completing the

FEMA benefits application process. Additionally, USDA has coordinated with private partners to restore utilities, such as electric, water, and telecommunications, to rural communities devastated by Katrina.

Animal Rescue Assistance - USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has nearly 50 veterinarians, wildlife specialists and quarantine experts assisting with recovery efforts in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. From rescuing people stranded by flood waters in the days immediately following the storm, to the rescue and recovery of pets, livestock and zoo animals, APHIS continues to play a critical role in the aftermath of the storm. More than 300 people were transported to safety in New Orleans by APHIS employees and close to 10,000 animals have been rescued and sheltered as a direct result of federal, state and private efforts to save animals left behind. Many of these animals have been treated by APHIS veterinarians who have provided much needed medical care while the pets wait for the return of their owners at local shelters.

In addition to pets, APHIS veterinarians assisted with efforts to rescue 8 dolphins from the waters surrounding Biloxi, Miss. The animals had been swimming around the city's flooded streets since they escaped the confines of their enclosure when the storm hit three weeks ago. APHIS employees also have ensured that any surviving livestock in both Mississippi and Louisiana have fresh water and dry ground for grazing or new bales of hay. APHIS has embarked upon some unusual missions including rescuing mice at Tulane University, which are vital to cancer research and the culmination of years of work by scientists at the school.

Technology Assistance - The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) National Cartography and Geospatial Center (NCGC) maps have been used by first responders to assess current ground conditions during the search and rescue of survivors. Current satellite and airborne imagery is being used to locate possible dangers, such as fires, and the safest route to rescue survivors. Through the use of NRCS soil survey data layers, USDA is locating the best areas for animal debris disposal and burial that will not endanger water sources. In addition, before and after satellite images of the hurricane affected area will help USDA and other federal agencies measure damages and assess new coastlines. NRCS soils and imagery data are managed by NCGC and available to the public at <http://datagateway.nrcs.usda.gov>.

Clean-up Efforts - NRCS continues working with other USDA agencies, FEMA and the state emergency agencies to assist with upcoming post-disaster cleanup and restoration projects in Louisiana, Florida, Mississippi and Alabama. NRCS has provided approximately \$17.4 million in Emergency Watershed Protection Program funds for hurricane relief efforts. FEMA provided authority and \$10 million to NRCS for the disposal of hundreds of animal carcasses. In Mississippi, more than six million birds have been buried with assistance from NRCS.

USDA is providing a 90-day moratorium on debt collection on electric, water and community facilities programs in the affected states. These facilities range from rural schools, libraries, hospitals, fire and rescue stations, police stations, community centers and public buildings. USDA has established a team to conduct assessments of these facilities with priority given to the hospitals and nursing home properties and also will go to the region to facilitate grant and loan applications for rebuilding.

Grain Transportation Assistance - USDA is taking additional steps to further reduce

stress on the grain transportation system caused by Hurricane Katrina. The actions include assisting with the movement of barges of damaged corn from New Orleans; providing incentives for alternative grain storage; encouraging alternative shipping patterns to relieve pressure; and allowing producers to store USDA-owned corn on the farm with the option to purchase.

Farmer and Rancher Assistance - USDA's Farm Service Agency has made \$170 million in emergency assistance available to agricultural producers. Of this amount, \$150 million is available through the Emergency Loan Program for assistance if there is a 30 percent reduction in crop production or physical losses to buildings or livestock. And \$20 million is available through the Emergency Conservation Program for repairing land damage and cost-share assistance for up to 75 percent of the cost. Additionally, USDA staff is coordinating closely with agricultural industry representatives to address specific needs as they arise.

Additional information and updates about USDA's hurricane relief efforts are posted daily on the Web site at <http://www.usda.gov>. For more information about making contributions for disaster assistance go to <http://www.FirstGov.gov> and <http://www.DisasterHelp.gov>.

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