



Bridging the Fire/Emergency Medical Services & Veterinary Professions

Teaching First Responders Basic Animal Life Support

Endorsed
by the
Minnesota
Veterinary
Medical
Association



Fact Sheet

What is BART?

Basic Animal Rescue Training (BART) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization operated by volunteers in the veterinary profession and supported by community donations. BART's mission is to empower firefighters and other first responder personnel with the training, knowledge base and equipment necessary to safely and effectively handle domestic animals encountered in emergency situations, in order to help preserve human health, safety and well being. BART offers classes to first responders (firefighters, police, paramedics, EMTs and Community Emergency Response Teams) teaching restraint and handling of pets, horses and livestock, as well as patient assessment/first aid and CPR for companion animals. The departments undergoing training receive an emergency medical kit that contains all the materials and supplies covered in the small animal course. BART has trained and equipped over 1,500 first responder personnel in Minnesota since December of 2004.

How did the BART program begin?

BART was established by veterinarian Dr. Janet Olson in December 2004 in response to the tragic loss of a pet in a house fire in New Brighton, Minnesota. The burning home belonged to a firefighter and his 13-year-old German Shorthaired Pointer named Bart was trapped inside. The department was able to put out the fire and locate Bart, but he was unresponsive. The firefighters, who included Dr. Olson's husband, did not have the knowledge base or equipment to help Bart and he died. The entire fire department was deeply affected by this tragedy, feeling helpless to assist one of their own. The BART program has been developed to honor the memory of Bart and to ensure fewer families will suffer a similar loss.

Why is BART needed?

Bart's story illustrates how first responders encounter animals during emergencies and desire to assist them. The BART courses teach these individuals how to help these four-legged loved ones, while maintaining their own safety. The public wants and needs their animals to be respected and cared for in emergencies, as was seen following the Gulf Coast hurricanes of 2005. During recounts of the rescue efforts many emergency personnel spoke of not knowing how or what to do when caring for pets during this time of crisis. Many people chose to stay behind when their pets were not allowed to be evacuated and sadly some of those individuals lost their lives as a result. In response to this tragedy, a U.S. Senate Bill entitled, *Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act* was introduced on April 5, 2006. This legislation passed both the House and Senate and was signed into law in October 2006. The PETS Act requires local and state disaster plans to include provisions for household pets and service animals.

The Minneapolis Fire Department embraced BART training after returning from deployment to Louisiana for emergency response and cleanup after Hurricane Katrina. Many local firefighters spent a large portion of their time performing animal rescue and assisting with pet care. More than 440 members of the Minneapolis Fire Department underwent BART training in the spring of 2006. One participant said, "BART empowers first responders to help animals encountered in daily emergency situations as well as in large scale disasters."

Does BART only teach pet rescue?

First responders are now seeking training not only for pets but for horses and livestock as well, as all species can be affected by emergencies. Due to multiple requests from Fire/EMS departments, BART has added a basic Equine and Livestock Restraint and Rescue Class and emergency supply kit to its curriculum.

Does BART teach only firefighters and EMS personnel?

BART has been asked to instruct Community Emergency Response (CERT) Teams in animal rescue, and recently expanded its curriculum in response. Classes for community level responders in both small animal and equine and livestock basic restraint and rescue have been developed.

Who has been trained by BART?

BART has trained the Minneapolis Fire Department, Minneapolis Airport Police K-9 unit, Woodbury Public Safety Department, U of MN Emergency Medical Services, the Minnesota Animal Control Association and the Fire Departments of New Brighton, Falcon Heights, Maple Grove, Waseca, Eagan, Roseville, Bloomington, Hamburg, Andover and Golden Valley thus far. Over 1,500 emergency response personnel have taken the training since the program began in December of 2004.

Who leads the BART program?

BART President and Founder Dr. Janet Olson has worked in the companion animal veterinary profession for over 16 years. She has practiced in a private, small animal referral clinic for the past eight years, providing her with extensive critical care experience. She is currently a cardiology resident at the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine. Dr. Olson received the prestigious Minnesota Veterinary Medical Association's Veterinary Service Award in 2007 in recognition of her accomplishments developing and leading this veterinary community outreach program. In addition, Olson is married to a member of the New Brighton Fire Department.

BART Vice President Dr. Karina Burger brings broad large animal and emergency planning experience to the program as she has practiced for eight years as a large animal and equine veterinarian. In addition, Burger was employed as an Emergency Planning Veterinarian during which time she helped develop and lead the Minnesota Veterinary Reserve Corps.

BART coordinates and collaborates with other emergency preparedness efforts in the state through the Minnesota Animal Disaster Coalition, which is made up of representatives from federal, state, and local agencies and volunteer organizations active in animal emergency preparedness and response in Minnesota. Both Olson and Burger are Minnesota Animal Disaster Coalition members.

BART is endorsed and supported by both the Minnesota Veterinary Medical Association and Minnesota Veterinary Medical Foundation. BART is also financially supported by the American Veterinary Medical Foundation, and has received letters of support from the Minnesota Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, the Minnesota Department of Health, the Minnesota Animal Control Association, Veterinary Medical Assistance Team – 5 (VMAT-5) and the Minneapolis Fire Department.

Does BART offer training outside of Minnesota?

BART has received training requests from several states and is exploring national expansion and forming chapters. The American Veterinary Medical Foundation recently granted BART \$50,000 to help start chapters in five new states. If you are interested in bringing BART to your area, call us at 612.282.2608.

Who teaches the BART courses?

Volunteer veterinarians, veterinary technicians and students in these programs teach the classes. BART has recruited and trained over 100 volunteers to assist with the training; 6-8 volunteers are needed to teach each class.

How much does BART training cost?

Basic Animal Rescue Training is supported entirely by charitable donations and grants. BART has offered all the training for free and has also raised the necessary funds to donate the medical kits. Due to the strong growth of the program and the challenge of raising sufficient funds to support this growth, BART encourages the departments trained to help raise the funds to support their training. BART has raised over \$100,000 thus far in donations from the Fire/EMS communities, the veterinary community and other supporting individuals for classes and emergency medical kits.

How can I help BART?

Continued donations are essential for BART to be able to continue its mission and services. BART is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and donations are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. To make a donation, send a check written to "BART" to Basic Animal Rescue Training, 158 New Brighton Road, New Brighton, MN 55112, or make a donation online on our website at www.BasicAnimalRescueTraining.org.