

# Veterinary Emergency Team (VET)

*Contributions to the VET at the Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences will directly benefit the people and animals of Texas adversely affected by natural disasters by supporting the veterinary first-responders who provide them with critical care during times of need.*

## The Initiative

Texas emergency response in the modern era has been defined by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, Hurricane Ike in 2008, and the Bastrop Wildfire Complex in 2011. The Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences (CVM) has a history of lending a helping hand in times of emergency. During Hurricane Rita, the Large Animal Hospital was converted to a surge hospital for special needs patients. The faculty, staff, and students provided a safe haven from the storm for more than 350 evacuees. In addition, faculty, staff, and students participated in organizing and running a companion animal emergency shelter in Brazos County, providing shelter for more than 700 animals evacuated from the coastal regions of Texas.

During the post-Katrina era, CVM faculty became actively involved in developing emergency response plans at the county level. The first test of these new plans occurred in 2008 when Hurricane Ike came ashore in Gavelston, and 200 large animals were evacuated from the coast and housed in the Brazos County Emergency Shelter.



lead agency in emergency response on behalf of animals at the state level, requested that the CVM provide this additional capacity. Faculty and staff at the CVM developed plans to provide an emergency response team and the Texas A&M Veterinary Emergency Team (VET) was formed.



Hurricane Ike demonstrated that increased veterinary capacity was needed in the emergency response structure. The Texas Animal Health Commission, the

## Our Objective



The mission of the VET is to provide veterinary medical support for animals in disaster situations. This includes the canine search and rescue teams attached to Texas Task Force One. The team also educates and trains veterinary students by offering elective courses in emergency response and management within the first three years of the veterinary curriculum.

The 2011 Bastrop Wildfire Complex was the first major deployment for the VET. The team was deployed with Texas Task Force One and through the care of the VET, the search and rescue dogs were able to work six consecutive days and complete their assigned mission in a state of exceptional physical health. In addition, the VET triaged more than 150 animals injured during the wildfire, making the inaugural deployment an overwhelming success.

## Your Support

The success of the first deployment was not without important lessons learned. The VET is equipped with a mobile and self-sufficient veterinary triage trailer. However, the VET must be more mobile and able to change locations at a much more rapid pace. The VET also needs to advance its educational efforts by building a facility for training and adding to its faculty and staff.

Contributing to the VET makes you a valuable part of the team working to provide the best in emergency response to animals in the state of Texas.



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