CASE STUDY

INCLUDING ANIMALS IN DISASTER PLANS

ORGANISATION	WORLD ANIMAL PROTECTION
COUNTRY	AUSTRALIA
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Project Background

This is an historic piece of work – focusing on a workshop that was held in 2011 as part of World Animal Protection's (previously WSPA's) Disaster Management programme.

As a global programme we aimed to get animals integrated into disaster plans, and Australia had requested our intervention as a result of the 2009 bushfires.

Valuable information is not easily accessible to those planning and involved with projects aiming to apply HBC theories and principles . Hence, HBCA is developing a resource that provides an overview of interventions and the lessons we can learn from them. If you have a case study to submit or any enquiries about this case study, please get in touch.

Why it's important to save animals in a disaster

Because they are sentient
→ Important to prevent and relieve injury, pain, hunger, etc.
→ Categories of animals
→ Livestock, working animals, companion animals
→ Animals in shelters
→ Animals in zoos and laboratories
→ In-patients at veterinary clinics

"This could be life/career changing!!"
Quote from a workshop attendee.

Welfare Concerns

Animals suffer as much as people do in disasters – either directly from the hazards involved during earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions, forest fires etc, or from the chaos in the aftermath where diseases spread, food is scarce and shelter is inadequate.

Most disaster prone regions overlap with areas where the world's poorest people live, and 70% of those depend on their animals for their livelihoods. Many countries have adequate emergency plans for people, but they fail to include animals which means that there is a secondary disaster where people and communities fail to recover after disaster strikes as their livelihoods have been lost.

Overview of Intervention

A participatory workshop involving key players from Australian State ministries. We focused on identifying the issues, and more importantly the barriers to inclusion of animals within the civil defense response and emergency plans. We then moved on to identify what solutions might be required to overcome each of those barriers, and we ended with public commitment (and action planning) whereby participants physically added their names to certain solutions and action points as a commitment to take these forward after the workshop.

Sustainability

The changes in Victoria are about as sustainable as we could hope for – enshrined in the government action plan.

Lessons to Pass On

Get the right people in the room (familiar with the issue, and capable of making the change you need to see). Give them the space to describe what it is like to be them. Trust that the answers lie with them – they will find the solutions, and then get them to publicly commit to the changes they are willing to take responsibility for. Suggest that you will follow up (we promised a second, follow up, workshop so they knew we were going to check up on them).

Achievements

Within 6 months of the workshop, the state of Victoria had implemented their action points and included animals within their plans. This action was also highly commended by the 2012 Resilient Australia Awards.

The Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Plan takes an all-species and all-hazards approach and describes emergency animal welfare services along with roles and responsibilities of animal owners, government agencies and animal welfare organisations.

Challenges

As this was a workshop, with major challenges being faced by participants after the workshop and without us it is hard to comment on the bigger picture. With regard to the workshop itself, some challenges revolved around many voices (most Australian states were represented, and they all felt that their own issues were unique to them). We planned to give them all enough time to share their own experiences and challenges, in order to clear the air and ensure the participatory elements of the workshop began on 'equal footing'.

Any Other Information

This is quite an old piece of work, and our work as an organisation has changed dramatically since then. We engage in far more HBC-type work now, but it is quite embryonic and therefore doesn't yet have the achievements to share. This was a great example of how we achieved change in the past.

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