

EXTRA! EXTRA! HALTER NEWS APRIL



Lori Finch, NVDAG Evac and Shelter Specialist, Julie Atwood, HALTER and Topper.

We attended the March NVDAG trainings for horse and livestock evacuation and sheltering, up at Paradise Acres in Orland, teaching horse handling and trailer safety to first responders, vet techs, police officers, communication experts, and others who are members of the North Valley Animal Disaster Group. The intensive (and exhausting!), but fun all-day training sessions are led by a team of pros. We learned the basics of professional radio communications to interface correctly with incident command, with more detailed sessions to follow. The evac trainings taught us the operational elements of evacuation and shelter deployment and management. We learned how to receive and respond to deployment instructions, sign in to dispatch, record our activities on regulation forms, check out radios, understand radio programming and language. Lessons also included how to build animal crates, assemble necessary gear for a variety of species, and radio communication protocols.

After a full day of learning the elements of deployment and evacuation protocols, we switched gears and became the trainers, assisting volunteer disaster service workers in the safe handling of horses, goats, sheep, (as well as helping out with chickens, dogs, and cats!), capturing loose horses, leading, and trailer loading and unloading. After observing multiple herds of horses in their pastures, assessing their behavior, catching and safely leading them to a staging site, trainees then learned trailer safety. Before leaving the pasture, animals were identified and notification left for owners and other responders. Most often, the only trailers permitted past a roadblock in rural disaster zones will be small bumper-pull trailers. These are frequently the only type of trailer able to safely navigate and access difficult roads and narrow driveways. They may also be the type of trailer most frequently owned by backyard horse and livestock owners, and therefore, the vehicle most readily available in evacuation scenarios. Understanding how to safely load, tie, and secure partitions and tailgates in these types of vehicles is critical to successful evacuations. Drivers undergo a thorough screening, and test, to determine their ability to check hitches, navigate, back, turn, and handle a variety of vehicles and trailers. After unloading the "rescued" animals, trainees led the animals to the "shelter" site.

The next exercise taught the safe and correct ways in which to lead horses into a stall or pen and release them. Here, all animals were identified, and intake forms completed and filed with the appropriate authorities.

Next, the scenario was reversed, with students leading and releasing animals in new surroundings. Whether you are a raw beginner, or have been working with animals for years, this training sharpens skills and senses! Understanding and employing the principles of Incident Command increases everyone's skill sets and teamwork.

Meeting and working with the array of volunteers is so inspiring and interesting!! The team consists of vets and techs, firefighters, police and animal control officers, truck drivers, pilots, retired military personnel, international animal rescue specialists, accountants, tech experts, communications pros, and more! Everyone is committed to the highest level of professionalism, and the common bond is their love and respect for animals.

Another recent training experience took place in the spectacular Redwood Regional Park, part of the astounding g East Bay Regional Parks system. EBRP has recently established its own Large Animal Rescue Team, which will enable their multi-agency network to respond to the many emergencies that arise in the vast network of trails and canyons in the system. The EBRP LART is fortunate to be funded in large part by its supporting Foundation. We were lucky to be guests at one of their trainings, and invited to assist with horse safety and handling, with help from two of their sturdy and unflappable police horses, Dusty and Guinness.

Down in the beautiful Henry Cowell State Park, at the warm and welcoming Santa Cruz County Horsemen's Association clubhouse and camping area, we attended one day of training with a group of long-time LAR experts, new fire-rescue trainees, and experienced horsemen and women brushing up on their skills and learning new techniques. It was a real eye-opener to listen to the stories of seasoned firefighters who have been responding to emergencies involving horses and cattle for more than 20 years. Hair-raising highway accidents, loose livestock, animals trapped in old wells and under fallen trees...their experiences have had major impacts on the technology and methods being improved all the time.



At Cal Fire Academy: RDPC & DHS Instructor Tracey Stevens with a few students: L-R: Hugh Briefman, LACAC, Fire Academy staff, Jerry Floyd, CDA Products, Michael Connell, instructor, TLAER

Finally, in Sacramento, HALTER founder Julie Atwood had the honor of being invited to participate in, and review, a pilot course that will be available to first responders and qualified community members later this year. The course was sponsored by the National Rural Disaster Preparedness Consortium, and is being developed for community disaster planners and managers.

Here is Julie's report:

It was a fantastic experience to sit in a classroom at the California State Fire Academy with a group from around the state, representing a wide variety of skills and experience. A portion of the curriculum entailed participating in model disasters in a mythical county, with a team comprised of people you've never met before.

I found myself on a team with a State Fish & Wildlife veterinarian, a senior Sacramento City Animal Control officer, Dr Jeff Smith of Middletown Animal Hospital, a university student majoring in animal biology, and a small animal shelter expert. Talk about using your ICS and mapping skills!!! And dinner afterwards led to loads of interesting stories from animal rescue and disaster management pros from around the country. Also, a lot of animal snapshot exchanges!!! This group could win the Letterman award for "most silly animal tricks...". A great day and evening.

In the coming weeks, HALTER will be at the HOOF-BEATS in the VINEYARD Benefit for Equi-Ed on April 16, at SERRA Equine Rescue Ranch for their Help a Horse Day benefit on April 24, up at UCD to meet with internationally-respected large animal rescue expert Jim Green of the UK, and, sponsoring an exciting 3-day LAR training up in Red Bluff ranch country.

That class will include a Technical module, utilizing commercial equipment such as the Large Animal Lift (LAL) and Anderson Sling.

Check the HALTER website HALTERproject.com for information & details!

May 14th!

GET PREPARED

Make a Go-Kit

Set up your Emergency Plan

Refresh emergency feed and water supply

Get horses and pets micro-chipped

Update vet records and photos

Check halters, leads, crates and cages

Meet your neighbors and their animals

Donate!

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Sonoma County Animal Services

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To Participate, Sponsor or for more information email Rescue@HALTERfund.org or visit RanchReadinessDay.com