

Foreword



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The emergency management profession has come a long way since Hurricane Katrina in 2005, which became the genesis for recognising the importance of creating animal-inclusive resilient communities. Over 1800 people died in that one event and 44 per cent of those who chose not to evacuate did so, at least in part, because they were not permitted to take their animals and pets.

As part of post-Katrina lessons, the *Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act* (USA) was passed in 2006 to ensure emergency plans had arrangements and funding for companion animals and assistance dogs. Since that time, Australia and New Zealand have both made great contributions to practice and scholarship in the emerging discipline of animal disaster management.

Considering animals as a cross-cutting theme in emergency management can enhance public safety through improving evacuation compliance, preventing animal owners returning to evacuated areas, protecting livestock-based livelihoods, improving animal welfare, reducing organisational and legal risk, supporting psychosocial recovery, improving public confidence and trust in authorities and meeting contemporary societal expectations.

Progress was exemplified with the inaugural Global Animal Disaster Management Conference (GADMC) that was conducted online in February 2021, hosted by Animal Evac New Zealand.

The challenges of COVID-19 forced us all to make better use of technology and as a result, GADMC became the world's first animal disaster management conference. It was huge! Initial expectations of 250 attendees were soon overtaken with over 1500 registered delegates and 40 presentations from around the world over a 10-day period. The conference attracted lead researchers and Professor Leslie Irvine, one of the world's top scholars in animal disaster management, was the keynote speaker and opened the conference.

The online delivery of the conference and the generosity of sponsors allowed the conference to be free to delegates and to cover the online hosting costs and the video recordings. The conference

committee acknowledge the sponsors, in particular World Animal Protection and the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience in the publishing of this themed edition both online and in print. The open-access nature of the *Australian Journal of Emergency Management* ensures expert opinion and peer-reviewed research remains accessible for decades to come.

Erik auf der Heide, a great emergency management scholar, once said emergency plans should be based on 'likely, not correct behaviour'. This is something that has stuck in my mind. Although we may want people to avoid harm's way, we know that people can do and will take risks, especially to safeguard animals, assets and livelihoods. From the 2019–20 summer bushfires in Australia to the Christchurch earthquake in 2011 and emergencies in between, we consistently see people putting themselves at risk for animals and wildlife. We can mitigate much of this risk if we have animal-inclusive emergency plans.

This themed edition is a companion to fantastic work in animal-inclusive planning as documented in a previous special edition of the journal in April 2015.¹ It has great advice on how to improve emergency plans; the aim is to be more effective in response and recovery. From wildlife to livestock, from Australia to Argentina, this edition brings together ideas, opinions and research to create more resilient communities.

A special thank you to my colleagues on the GADMC committee, Associate Professor Melanie Taylor, Mr Gerardo Huertas and Ms Christine Belcher.

1. Australian Journal of Emergency Management 2015, vol. 30, no. 2. At: <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/ajem-april-2015>.