Experiential learning in disaster response for veterinary students and veterinarians

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Veterinarians along with medical doctors, firefighters, and nurses are among the top respected professionals in the world today. The veterinary professional's daily focus on saving lives makes their leadership role a vital one for development of community disaster response planning and mitigation for both animals and people. In order for veterinarians to be effective leaders in disaster situations, they must be trained in basic core competencies including the Incident Command System (ICS) and National Incident Management System (NIMS) comprehension, animal euthanasia, biosecurity, all-hazards emergency preparedness, business continuity training, certified responder training, and incident de-briefing. Specific instruction on biosecurity and euthanasia are included in standard veterinary professional curricula; business planning and continuity are available as elective courses in veterinary schools and ICS/NIMS are available to the public via the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), a division of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The Louisiana State University-School of Veterinary Medicine (LSU-SVM) along with the Louisiana State Animal Response Team (LSART), has developed a training certification program in technical aspects of disaster response, disaster planning, and debriefing for veterinary students, veterinarians, animal stake-holder groups and other animal care professionals for the purpose of strengthening community resilience in disaster situations. [Podium presentations at International Disaster Conference & Expo, New Orleans, LA 2015; North Carolina Veterinary Conference, Raleigh, NC 2012, Pacific Veterinary Conference Sacramento, CA 2012; Southwest Veterinary Symposium, Fort Worth, TX 2010; Poster presentation - World Congress on Disaster and Emergency Medicine, Beijing, China, 2010; International Large Animal Rescue Conference for Disaster University of Adelaide, Roseworthy Campus, AUST 2013; Published Prehosp Disast Med, 2011, 26:154-155].