

Indiana's Veterinary Medical Reserve Corps (VMRC/ASERT)

The Indiana State Board of Animal Health (BOAH) manages a roster of veterinarians, veterinary technicians and other personnel across Indiana who are part of the Veterinary Medical Reserve Corps (VMRC)/Animal Surveillance Emergency Response Team (ASERT).

In 1995, Indiana became the first state in the nation to include animals as part of the state's official emergency management plan for floods, tornadoes and other large-scale disasters. What began as the SAVE (State Annex for Veterinary Emergencies) program has evolved to today's VMRC/ASERT. This program is maintained in cooperation with the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, and members may be called upon to respond to veterinary emergencies in Governor-declared disaster situations. This unique public-private partnership coordinates efforts to evacuate, rescue, treat and shelter animals in distress.

Who can be a VMRC/ASERT volunteer?

Veterinarians and veterinary technicians licensed in Indiana and animal control personnel may apply to Indiana's VMRC/ASERT team.

Indiana's VMRC/ASERT team is comprised of state, federal and private animal health and care experts and others who are willing to respond to meet the needs of animals and their owners in governor-declared disaster situations and animal disease events.

What do VMRC/ASERT Volunteers do?

Natural Disasters

An important function of emergency management is the orderly and coordinated response to situations by volunteers and responders who are rostered (registered) with the state and respond under direction of the lead agency. Membership with Indiana's VMRC/ASERT brings rostered individuals into that system. BOAH, in coordination with Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS), serves as the lead agency for response to animals in disasters. BOAH maintains the VMRC/ASERT roster.

In the event of a flood or tornado, team members may be asked to perform a variety of necessary disaster-related tasks, including:

- Rescue and capture stranded or abandoned animals;
- Treat and triage injured animals;
- Feed and house displaced animals as part of temporary shelters; and
- Identify and reunite animals separated from their owners.

Volunteers should never self-deploy.



Indiana State
Board of Animal Health

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Local Planning

VMRC/ASERT volunteers may have the opportunity to work with local officials in planning and preparing for disasters affecting animals at the county or district level. This involves attending local emergency management meetings and working with first responders to develop plans for handling animals during emergencies at the county level. VMRC/ASERT volunteers may have the opportunity to educate pet and livestock owners about the need to prepare for disasters. Animal owners bear the ultimate responsibility for caring for their pets and livestock before, during and after a disaster.

Animal Health Emergencies

In the event of an animal health emergency VMRC/ASERT volunteers may also be asked to assist BOAH if state and federal resources have been exhausted. VMRC/ASERT volunteers must be trained on proper donning and doffing of personal protective equipment and be respirator mask fit-tested before responding to an animal health emergency.

During a large-scale animal health emergency BOAH may call upon VMRC/ASERT members to help contain and/or eradicate a disease threat, such as highly pathogenic avian influenza.

Additional Training and Exercises

VMRC/ASERT members will be invited to participate in training specific to emergency response, including classes, online courses and even exercise events. These opportunities will help team members understand and apply concepts and situations that are related to a disease beyond just animal health and care tasks.

How do I become a VMRC/ASERT volunteer?

Go to BOAH's website at: www.in.gov/boah. Or Contact BOAH at: 317-544-2400 or email: animalhealth@boah.in.gov.