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## MOCK SHELTER PREPARES ANIMAL RESPONSE TEAM FOR WORST

Hurricane Irene is the most recent reminder of how vulnerable humans and their pets really are to the mercy of the environment. While many organizations exist to help people, not as many exist to help pets and livestock.

To many people, pets are family and livestock means livelihood. To take care of their animals is to allow people to take care of themselves.

September is National Preparedness Month ([cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)), Washington State Animal Response Team serves western Washington by helping people prepare for these disasters via training open to the general public as well as WASART's volunteers. Additionally, WASART prepares for taking care of these animals when disaster does strike, operating under the belief that preparing for the worst allows for the best outcome.

Upcoming trainings include Red Cross CPR/First Aid and also Mock Sheltering Training.

## ABOUT WASART

Washington State Animal Response Team is an all-volunteer, all-donation supported 501(c) non-profit organization facilitating the rescue of animals in emergency situations such as floods, fires, and earthquakes as well as one-off rescues such as a horse trapped in a well, or a dog stranded halfway down a cliff.

Members train in some of the more difficult rescue areas. Skills honed by many of the group members include swift water rescue, rope work and the use of pulleys and rappelling, animal assessment and handling, and long-term sheltering. Some members have even completed courses put on by Homeland Security, and the organization is considered part of FEMA.

Gretchen McCallum, J.D. and Greta Cook originally conceived of WASART in response to Hurricane Katrina. "A third of the people in New Orleans wouldn't leave their homes when Katrina approached. A third of those people wouldn't leave because they weren't allowed to bring their pets with them," said McCallum, currently serving as president of WASART. "We were determined not to let that happen here. Not in our state."

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