



Animals and food in disasters

Re-establishing food security for affected people is a fundamental post-disaster response. Nowhere is this a more pressing priority than in low-income countries, where many communities are heavily reliant on livestock and working animals to access nutrition. For the world's poorest people, animals are the foundation of dietary and economic resilience and safeguarding animal wellbeing must be an integral part of any effective disaster response.

At **World Animal Protection**, we have 50 years of experience in helping people to help animals in disasters. We partner with local and national governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations and communities to deliver expert emergency response and world-leading risk reduction and preparedness planning to bring about positive solutions for animals and people alike.

We look at the impact of animals

Those nations most vulnerable to the impacts of disasters are also those that can least afford to lose their animals. Livestock and working animals play an indispensable role in all four pillars of food security¹ (availability, access, stability and utilisation), be it through production, employment or income. If communities are to maintain an adequate food supply in the wake of a crisis, their animals must not only be protected but also be kept in good health.

Disasters reveal the true extent to which communities are reliant on livestock for their food security: when crops fail or are destroyed by flood or famine, products such as milk can be consumed all year round. The role that foods of animal origin² have in combatting malnutrition is of particular importance to people living in poor households, for whom maintaining adequate nutrition is an on-going challenge.

The necessity of healthy and resilient animals in the wake of a disaster is increasingly acknowledged. This is not an 'optional extra'. If we are to sustainably safeguard communities' food security and ultimate resilience, we need healthy, well-cared-for animals to maintain life and to prevent reliance on aid. But how do we achieve this?

We focus on an integrated response

By actively including animals in organisational, regional and national emergency response and recovery plans and policies, we can reduce the numbers lost in disasters and their aftermath. In doing so we protect food security and mitigate community vulnerability.

The survival of working animals and livestock reduces pressure on people who are faced with the task of rebuilding, not only by providing for their immediate nutritional needs but also by helping them to maintain their agricultural outputs (such as animal-sourced food and manure) which are critical to internal and traditional market systems.



The benefits of an integrated response to food security needs – one that considers the welfare of animals and people as innately interlinked – are wide ranging. The active role of women in livestock management means that they must be key partners in plans that protect animals and will be pivotal to community and household recovery, contributing to the sustainable development goal of gender equality.

Acknowledgement is growing that animal welfare is a critical part of any governmental or organisational emergency planning, policy and response that seeks to sustainably protect food security. In the last few years, **World Animal Protection** has been working with the governments of Australia, Colombia, Costa Rica, India, Dubai and Mexico on how owners can be supported to safeguard their animals in times of crisis and maintain good animal health during recovery.

We offer advice and assistance to a range of partners on integrating animal welfare into disaster planning. We do this to achieve our vision of a world in which animals and the people who depend on them are protected from disasters. To find out more about what we can do for you, visit worldanimalprotection.org

- 1 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2011). World livestock 2011 - Livestock in food security. Rome: FAO. Accessed at www.fao.org/docrep/014/i2373e/i2373e.pdf
- 2 Campbell, R., & Knowles, T. (2011). The economic impacts of losing livestock in a disaster, a report for the World Animal Protection. Prepared by Economists at Large, Melbourne, Australia.