

—SAFE EVACUATIONS—

In heat of fire, H.E.A.T. is there for animals

by Margo Hamilton



H.E.A.T. TEAM IS READY TO HELP EVACUATE LARGE ANIMALS

You can evacuate Fido, Fluffy and Fife more easier than you can your horse.

If you own horses, donkeys, mules, alpacas and/or llamas you need to know about Jefferson County Horse Evacuation Assistance Team, called

Jeffco H.E.A.T. It is one of three large animal evacuation teams in Jeffco. It was created to offer safe and expert evacuation of large animals in times of fires, natural disasters, vehicle accidents and impounds.

This dedicated group of volunteers was called in to help other communities, including large animal evacuation during the Black Forest fire.

H.E.A.T. volunteers safely handle large animals with expert care, dignity and respect under the most extreme and terrifying circumstances.

Scott Halladay, founder of Jeffco H.E.A.T. and a Jeffco firefighter, said, "H.E.A.T. volunteers receive hours of training, each team carries horse first aid kits and we are experienced in working with horses."

H.E.A.T. teams are comprised of two people who have limited time to get horses into trailers and out of harm's way. Rump tags are glued on every animal evacuated. If owners are on the property when H.E.A.T. arrives, they complete the paperwork.

Then the animals are transported to the Jefferson County Fairgrounds where trained volunteers ensure animals are safely stalled, watered and fed. The state brand inspector and State Veterinarians Office representatives are on site.

Using halters and lead ropes, H.E.A.T. can catch and trailer your livestock. However, it is imperative that owners ensure their horses are catchable, will lead and load into a trailer.

If you have a problem horse, put in the time to dutifully work with the animal to ensure he can be evacuated.

"We have approximately 20 minutes to work with your

horses to get them loaded," Scott said. "Our team loves horses, which is why we do this, and we don't believe in heavy handling. To date there's been only one horse, a mustang, which refused to allow us to catch him."

Scott suggests the following

guidelines when you are faced with a fire:

1) If you are home and you receive a level 1 or 2 reverse 911 call, you will have time to evacuate your own livestock, if you have the equipment. It's imperative you take them where they will be safe. The volunteers at the Jeffco Fairgrounds are awesome, and they will welcome your horses.

2) If you receive a level 1 or 2 reverse 911 call and you are not home, do not try to go home to evacuate your animals. You will put yourself and others in harm's way if you attempt to go home.

3) If you are home and receive a Code 3 message through reverse 911, you don't have time to evacuate yourself and your animals. Evacuate your family, leave your animals and know they will be taken care of.

4) Call Jeffco Animal Control at 303-271-5070 to report how many horses or other large animals are on your property.

4) If you own a large chunk of land, get your horses corralled into a smaller pasture so H.E.A.T. doesn't have to go looking for them.

H.E.A.T. recently received national recognition and was contacted by the National Response Team to partner with them in times of hurricanes and tornadoes.

"Jefferson County has the best animal response teams in the nation," said Scott. "We now have sheriff-to-sheriff agreements to provide mutual aid through agreements that evacuation teams are covered under various counties insurance. Visit H.E.A.T.'s website at jeffcoheat.org.