



Animal Rescue Practitioners Forum

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Now in its fourth year, the CFOA Animal Rescue Practitioners Forum continues to develop and make good progress. Over the past year the forum has seen its membership expand, a national MOU/Agreement has been developed with the RSPCA, and the forum is working on training packages for firefighters, vets and RSPCA officers.

The CFOA Animal Rescue Practitioners Forum was established in 2008 and the terms of reference include:

- Developing national standards for animal rescues and training.
- Identifying and establishing accreditation for animal rescue training.
- Identifying and sharing best practice in relation to animal rescue incidents.
- Offering advice and support to Fire and Rescue Services and other organisations regarding animal rescues.

Partnerships have been established with the RSPCA and the British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) in order to share best practice and develop new procedures.

ACO Bob Ratcliffe (Hampshire), chair of the CFOA forum added "The forum is a great success and we continue to make good progress. The forum is open to Fire and Rescue Services that have an animal rescue capability and to those Fire and Rescue Services that are developing such a response. The safety of the public and fire and rescue staff is the key priority at such incidents. The fire and rescue service work closely with colleagues from the RSPCA and the Veterinary Association regarding animal welfare. Last year we also established contacts with colleagues in Scotland who are keen to establish a similar system throughout Scotland. The enthusiasm and professionalism of all members of the forum is tremendous and, through it, we are making real progress".

The forum is developing 3 levels of competence in this area of operation:

AR1 – Animal Rescue Awareness – Suitable for firefighters and vets who may find themselves responding to an animal rescue incident.

AR2 – Animal Rescue Responder – This is for teams expected to carry out the animal rescue and teaches techniques as well as animal handling.

AR3 – Animal Rescue Instructor/Specialist – A course which teaches advanced animal rescue techniques.



Animal Rescue Training at Lyndhurst in the New Forest

RSPCA Superintendent Tim Minty, said “Working with the forum has been extremely rewarding for the RSPCA. The animal rescue training being rolled out is a great benefit to animal welfare and a major step forward in ensuring the needs of the animal are being met in extremely difficult circumstances. Ensuring that those who are rescuing are working as a team, trained in rescue techniques and animal behaviour, gives the rescue a much greater chance of success. I am also extremely pleased with the progress we have made in developing an MOU/Agreement with CFOA which clarifies our respective roles and outlines how we can work together in the best interests of animal and human welfare”.



Donkeys rescued by the RSPCA from a field in the village of Cattal, York after flooding September 2012.

Professor Josh Slater of the British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA), said “Our partnership has been a wonderful example of joint working and the progress made since we started this initiative has been outstanding. We have very rapidly come from a situation where there was no training available for vets to having a well-developed course hosted and delivered by animal rescue specialists and we are rapidly improving capability within the veterinary profession. BEVA has also been really pleased to contribute to the training provision and this joint training has been vital in delivering the message of the importance of veterinary involvement in large animal rescues. BEVA has been delighted to be included as a stakeholder in the CFOA Animal Rescue Practitioners Forum and has really appreciated being able to input into the work of the Forum.”



Fire and Rescue Service and veterinary profession working together

The Safer Horse Rescues (formerly the Emergency Services) protocol has been entered into between Fire and Rescue Services and BEVA. It is an equine rescue initiative, launched by the equine industry (most notably Horse and Hound magazine), the British Horse Society (BHS) and BEVA, in close partnership with FRS animal rescue specialists. The protocol sets out procedures for the emergency services when dealing with incidents involving horses, with the aim of minimising delays in injured animals receiving veterinary care, maximising the chances of a positive outcome for the animal and improving the safety of all those involved.

BEVA has now compiled a Directory of Equine vets, drawn from its membership, that have agreed to assist the emergency services at animal rescues. This is to ensure that appropriate veterinary care reaches animals as quickly as possible.

More information about the CFOA Animal Rescue Practitioners Forum is also available through the CFOA website www.cfoa.org or the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service website www.hantsfire.gov.uk. Alternatively contact at HFRS by emailing Laurena House e-mail laurena.house@hantsfire.gov.uk The forum is represented here today by Brian Porter; he can be contacted on porterb@sky.com .