



Newsletter Vol 2, No. 1, January 2013

Summer emphasis

At this time of year, we hold our resources ready for response to events, notably bushfires.

Our normal level of training events is planned to recommence in February 2013, with a view to conducting a training exercise in August, prior to the 2013/14 bushfire season.

Our web site will be regularly updated with coming events.

Veterinarians, veterinary nurses, wildlife carers and interested general public wishing to contribute are welcome to register to attend SAVEM workshops.

Ending 2012

The Community Resilience field encompasses Emergency Services in their broadest sense.

At the end of the year SAVEM was recognised amongst these peers.

In early November SAVEM was announced as State Winner of the 2012 Resilient Australia Awards in an event held at Adelaide Oval SACA Committee room, attended by personnel from the Federal Attorney-General's Department, the state Community Safety Directorate and South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission. Other agencies attending spanned a range of Emergency Services including SA Ambulance Service, Red Cross, Country Fire Service and Department of Community and Social Inclusion.

Early in December SAVEM was represented in Canberra at the National Resilient Australia Awards, where we won Highly Commended.

Over 100 projects were entered, about a dozen were recognised. The national winner in the Federal category was the team from South Australia's Department for Communities and Social Inclusion for their work in establishing National Guidelines for Managing Donated goods, to mitigate the high workload and cost which arises from unsuitable materials being given as "donations" in an emergency appeal.

SAVEM's last training workshop for 2012 was for Team Leaders at PIRSA at Glenside. We engaged Bob Kearney of *Leading Emergency Services* for a day of Leadership training. The day was informative, challenging, very practical and most enjoyable, and we look forward to an ongoing training program with Bob. SAVEM is about serious business, but we do want all our people to enjoy the experience as well. As for all the 2012 Adelaide based SAVEM workshops, thanks must go to Kay's Kitchen for their consistently scrumptious catering, which all comes with a smile.



Bushfires

It is worrying to see the extent of emergency events occurring very early in the bushfire season. Two fires near Port Lincoln in late November saw some SAVEM response.

The first fire reminded us that not always are actions by others to best practice standard. Other agencies involved themselves in transporting injured animals too hastily, apparently without sufficient first aid treatment and rehydration therapy. There is on-going advocacy and communications through which we hope improved response becomes the norm in future.

This event also brought to the surface that while broader agencies are not activated when local resources can cope, SAVEM can still have a helpful support role to offer sound assistance to local efforts. Normally SAVEM is activated via PIRSA. Conversation has begun about our flexibility to self activate in that resource support role, while maintaining close communication with the Zone Emergency Centre (ZEC).

SAVEM was placed on Standby at the time of the second Port Lincoln fire. This enabled us to trial several aspects of the SAVEM Plan. We were very appreciative of the individuals amongst our trained volunteers who made themselves available to go to Port Lincoln at short notice, giving us the immediate capability to staff a Local Control Centre and an Operations Field Team if needed. This thanks extends to all employers and practice principals who made provision for their staff members to leave the workplace if required.

Once again ProVet made themselves available to resource a response, and Toll offered to transport emergency Veterinary material to Port Lincoln free of charge.

The event gave us the opportunity to put our own systems into practice. This included establishing in-field contacts in the locality. The fire position meant local vet practices and RSPCA shelter locations were evacuated. Most impressive was the local council Ranger who had transport and evacuation in hand, and the ready involvement of animal facilities as far away as Whyalla and Tumby Bay receiving evacuees. With the effective local knowledge of Annabel Forrest and Greg Sezun of *Vets on Eyre*, local government (in Pt Lincoln and Tumby Bay), the Show Society president, private kennel operators and agistment properties, SAVEM was able to gather together a list of workable evacuation options. Wildlife carers from as far away as Port Macquarie in New South Wales offered assistance if required.

The Zone Emergency Centre made available a contact officer and we were asked for updates; which meant we weren't clogging communications into the area during the event.

In effect, it all worked.

Finally, the extent of the event meant the local practices were able to cope, knowing that support resourcing was available as called for. We were able to stand down.

The contradiction is that we train with the hope to never be needed. As a result we have limited opportunities to trial our systems. Our thanks therefore to everyone in



SAVEM who makes themselves available and who do the preparatory work, so that we can respond quickly and effectively.

A word of thanks to our webmaster Jan, who updates our website promptly, making this too a ready source of up-to-date information, notably at times of emergency event occurring.

The coming year

There is something of a sense after three years of evolution, that SAVEM is a fully formed entity.

All of you involved in the further preparation of our systems, notably SOPs, know there is still work to be done.

Similarly, Emergency Services' understanding and knowledge of SAVEM, and what we bring to the Emergency Management table, is an on-going task.

While State level Emergency Management is fully aware of our Assured status as a "Participating Agency" in the State Emergency Management Plan, informing operational local brigades is a work in progress.

It is up to us to improve their awareness, and their understanding of the positive role animal rescue plays in helping to preserve human life in emergency situations.

At the end of 2012 we were able to circulate our first information brochure which describes who we are and what we do (and don't) do.

This has been mailed to all veterinary practices, emergency agencies and community information outlets in the higher risk regions of South Australia.

We particularly thank the majority of veterinary practices who have received this material and willingly display and hand out to the public.

We fully expect the first print run of 5000 to be exhausted shortly, and will look to improving and reprinting on an on-going basis. For supplies of brochures, please email info@savem.org.au

From this too comes an increase in the invitations to present about our activities to local branch level of emergency units and community organizations, with several engagements booked for January and February.

We use highly truncated versions of the Level 1 training Powerpoint in these tasks.

We are pleased to now have a dedicated computer and projector specifically for SAVEM tasks, rather than using personal equipment.

We are also asked to prepare articles for industry and wider audience publications.

In a similar vein, we have begun to seek sponsorship toward a dedicated vehicle, which SAVEM can use not only in training and public information, but in particular as an in-field staging post to support field teams in terms of transport, position-of-



contact communications, and support resources in terms of caging, microchipping, first response medication, and food and water to the field team members.

The next in the series of **Regional** training workshops is planned for Port Lincoln during the first half of February. Workshops in the Riverland and South East of the State will follow. SAVEM volunteers who are able to assist in organising these events are encouraged to email the Coordinator at info@savem.org.au. A two-day training exercise prior to the 2013/14 bushfire season will help consolidate & refresh volunteers' skills, with reviews of key parts of the SAVEM Plan and from previous Introductory and Team Leader programs, Treating Burns and Legislation courses.

With best wishes for 2013,

Rachel Westcott

SAVEM Coordinator

The purpose of life is a life of purpose. Stuart Ellis, AM. Leading Emergency Services.