



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS  
**Department of Agricultural Resources**  
251 Causeway Street, Suite 500, Boston, MA 02114  
617-626-1700 fax 617-626-1850 www.Mass.gov/AGR



MITT ROMNEY  
Governor

ELLEN ROY HERZFELDER  
Secretary

KERRY HEALEY  
Lieutenant Governor

DOUGLAS P. GILLESPIE  
Commissioner

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**CONTACT:** Brad Mitchell, DAR  
617-626-1771  
Joe Ferson, EOE  
617-626-1119

**STATE ISSUES EMERGENCY ORDER TO INSURE ANIMALS BROUGHT IN  
FROM HURRICANE AREAS ARE HEALTHY**

The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) announced the release of an Emergency Order concerning animals that have been displaced by Hurricane Katrina that may be brought into Massachusetts. The order requires that any animals brought into the state from Katrina-affected states go through a DAR-approved process designed as part of the Massachusetts Emergency Management Plan for Animals in Disaster.

- The Order applies to all domestic animals including livestock and companion animals.
- The Order applies to animals coming from **Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.**

Under this emergency plan, DAR has already worked with the Massachusetts Animal Coalition, MSPCA and the Animal Rescue League of Boston to ensure that pets that came into Otis Air Force Base with people displaced by Katrina were properly vaccinated and healthy.

In addition to today's Order, DAR is working to bring displaced animals directly from the gulf coast region into Massachusetts due to the current inability of that region to care and house all its animals. Animals brought to Massachusetts would first go through isolation where they would receive veterinary care and necessary vaccinations. These animals would also be identified with pertinent information to be posted on various websites with the hopes their owners could find and claim them.

The Emergency Order will ensure that all animals brought into the Commonwealth from Katrina-ravaged areas go through a DAR-approved process.

"We've spoken with a number of groups and individuals who had plans to bring animals in on their own without any of the necessary provisions to ensure that animals are free of disease, or would be properly listed so their owners would have the opportunity to find them" state Commissioner Douglas P. Gillespie of DAR. "This order does not prevent animals from coming into Massachusetts from the Gulf Coast; it simply makes sure that efforts are coordinated, and that the animals are handled and processed properly. Coordination of efforts is key to the success of any emergency operation."

"The plight of the 'Katrina animals' is pulling at the heartstrings of animal lovers," stated Ann Lindsay, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Animal Coalition. "When the shelter and rescue

community is called on to help it will be in a rational, coordinated manner so that we are protecting not only our own animals but the animals from the disaster areas, too. The animal welfare community in Massachusetts looks forward to being able to provide assistance to these animals."

"The Massachusetts relief effort is called *Operation Helping Hands*," noted Carter Luke, Vice President of the MSPCA. "We think Massachusetts' helping hands can reach out to paws too. This is about trying to keep families together. The humane and veterinary communities have joined forces with the Mass Dept of Agricultural Resources to help the homeless animals who are also victims of this terrible disaster and either reconnect them to the families in the south, or find them new families."

DAR will rescind the Order as the situation becomes more stable in affected Gulf Coast states. The Order does not apply to service animals accompanied by their owners. Questions from individuals or organizations who are planning on bring animals into Massachusetts from these states can call **617.626.1771**. Full text of the Order can be found at:

<http://mass.gov/agr/animalhealth/katrina-emergency-order.htm>