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Department of Agriculture and Forestry Update

### **Agriculture Commissioner Issues Pet Shelter Update**

Baton Rouge - Agriculture and Forestry Commissioner Mike Strain, D.V.M. said pet shelters for animal owners with critical transportation needs (CTN) are ready for service during the anticipated Hurricane Gustav evacuation.

"We are taking the necessary steps to ensure the safety of Louisiana's pets," Strain said.

Those with pets that will need assistance to evacuate are urged to make arrangements with their local parish Office of Emergency Preparedness (OEP) as soon as possible to arrange transportation to the pet friendly shelter, Strain added.

"It is imperative that pet owners with critical transportation needs get to the parish pick up points as soon as possible," Strain said. "It will take time to register everyone and their pets and complete all the paperwork accurately."

Parish pick up points for transportation to the CTN pet shelters are expected to close as storm conditions become unsafe for volunteer and OEP personnel.

Additional shelters for pets and people without critical transportation needs are being readied as well and will be available as storm conditions dictate. Strain stressed that the pet shelters are not "stop and drop" facilities.

"Pet ownership is a personal responsibility," Strain said. "Once you get your pet to a shelter you will be expected to provide care for your dogs and cats during your evacuation."

Pet owners will be sheltered separately from their pets but close enough to provide care for the animals. More than 160 trucks have been outfitted with pet crates to handle the evacuation, Strain said. Residents that cannot drive themselves and their pets out of Gustav's way are advised to contact their local parish Office of Emergency Preparedness to arrange transportation to the pet shelters.

People with or without pets who are evacuating on their own should stop at shelter-information points along the evacuation route to receive a reservation for the nearest shelter with openings. Those shelters will open as mass-scale evacuations begin.

The shelter-information points (also listed on the Louisiana evacuation guides) are located at:

- Tourist Welcome Center, U.S. 65 & 84, 1401 Carter St., Vidalia.
- Tourist Welcome Center, 836 I-20 West, Tallulah.
- Sammy's Truck Stop, I-49, Exit 53, 3601 La. 115 West, Bunkie.
- Med Express Office, 7525 U.S. 71, Alexandria.
- LSU-Shreveport, P.E. Gym, One University Place, Shreveport.
- Pickering High School, 180 Lebleu Road, Leesville.
- Tourist Information Center, 8904 U.S. 165, Oberlin, La.

LDAF State Veterinary Officer Dr. Henry Moreau said the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales and Parker Coliseum on LSU's Baton Rouge campus will not be used as shelters during the Tropical Storm Gustav event.

"Lamar-Dixon and Parker Coliseum were tapped into service after Katrina but will not be used as shelters during Gustav," Moreau said. "Do not go to Lamar Dixon or Parker with your pets, horses or livestock. There are no shelter accommodations at those locations."

Moreau said evacuees with large animals should contact their local LSU AgCenter county agent for information on what accommodations can be made for horses and livestock. Strain said the LDAF office is open 24 hours a day to advise residents on pet and livestock issues. The phone number is 225-922-1234 or 800-558-9741. The LDAF Animal Evacuation Center can be found at the LDAF Website at [www.ldaf.state.la.us](http://www.ldaf.state.la.us). Additional information can be found at the Louisiana State Animal Response Team Website at [www.lsart.org](http://www.lsart.org).