

LOUISIANA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

JOINT INFORMATION CENTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 3, 2008

Department of Agriculture and Forestry News Update

Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry completes plans for pet return

BATON ROUGE --The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF) has completed plans to return evacuated pets and their owners to the evacuation pickup points in their home parishes.

LDAF, working with the Louisiana State Animal Rescue Team and dedicated volunteers, ensured that pets and their owners with critical transportation needs were rescued from the path of Hurricane Gustav, said LDAF Commissioner Mike Strain.

"We evacuated 1,604 pets with their owners to pet shelters in Shreveport and Alexandria," Strain said. "200 cats, 1400 dogs, a rabbit, bird, guinea pig and a crab were evacuated well in advance of the storm."

The State Fairgrounds of Louisiana in Shreveport housed 1,539 pets while the LSU at Alexandria location hosted 65 pets.

"It may sound funny that somebody brought a crab with them but it just goes to show how responsible people feel for the animals in their care," Strain said. "We wanted to provide a way for everyone with pets and a critical transportation need an avenue to escape the storm."

Strain said pet owners were allowed to bring their pets on the buses with them if they weighed less than 15 pounds.

"Forty percent of the pets traveled with their owners on the evacuation buses," Strain said. "Most of the evacuated pets came from Orleans and Jefferson parishes."

Strain said the evacuated pet population even increased when a dog birthed a litter of seven puppies at the Shreveport shelter.

Volunteer veterinarian Brad Efferson of Shreveport said the mother and pups were doing just fine.

"She whelped the puppies at the rate of one per hour," Efferson said. "The puppies are nursing just like they're supposed to."

266 of the evacuated pets were temporarily separated from their owners because human shelters were filled.

Strain assured those owners that their pets are being well-cared for.

"We have a team of animal health professionals monitoring the well-being of all evacuated pets," Strain said. "They will be reunited with their owners as soon as possible."

For the latest on Hurricane Gustav, you can visit emergency.louisiana.gov or call the state's emergency hotline at 1-866-288-2484 to listen to a recorded message with the most up-to-date information.

-30-