

CHARLESTON COUNTY NEWS RELEASE

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See photos: <http://www.charlestoncounty.org/NewsImages/DART.htm>

Disaster Animal Response Team Training Helps Pets and Livestock through Emergencies

First class begins Feb. 21, classes available only to Community Emergency Response Team members

Charleston County's Emergency Preparedness Division is introducing a new program, the Disaster Animal Response Team (DART).

DART is designed to assist pets and livestock in Charleston County before, during and after a disaster or emergency, and is being conducted in association with the Community Emergency Response Team program.

The program was developed by Shawn Jones and Jim Tarter of Charleston County's Emergency Preparedness Division.

"We recognize that pets are an issue when it comes to emergency management because many people won't evacuate without taking their pets," Tarter said.

Anyone interested in participating in the DART program must have completed the Community Emergency Response Team program first. Tarter says this training is required is because it's important for those who want to help animals to be able to take care of themselves first.

DART members will assist in pet-friendly shelters, such as the Hurricane Pet Shelter at the North Charleston Coliseum. Members may assist various SPCA'S and Animal Control Officers with large scale incidents or in cases of evacuee/relocation missions held at the Charleston International Airport.

Tarter expects interest in DART training to be high, as there is an increasing demand for animal response measures to be considered during an emergency. So far, 15 Community Emergency Response Team members have registered for DART training. The class size is limited to 30 students.

DART training will begin on Wednesday, Feb. 21. It will consist of FEMA Individual Study Courses and three classes, taught one night a week, for three weeks on Wednesdays from 6-9 p.m. A \$20 fee covers the Red Cross Pet First Aid Course, but will be waived for those who have already completed this course. The courses will be held at the Lonnie Hamilton III, Public Services Building (4045 Bridge View Drive, off Leeds Avenue in North Charleston) in Room 339 on the third floor.

To register for DART training, contact Jim Tarter, Charleston County Emergency Preparedness Division, by phone at (843) 202-7405 or by e-mail at jtarter@charlestoncounty.org. You must be a Community Emergency Response Team member to register.

Visit www.charlestoncounty.org "Citizens Corps Programs" for more information on the Community Emergency Response Team, and for news, services and up-to-date information relating to Charleston County Government.