

Date of Hearing: June 16, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Robert Rivas, Chair

SB 547 (Glazer) – As Amended April 13, 2021

**SENATE VOTE:** 39-0

**SUBJECT:** Animals: emergency response: California Veterinary Emergency Team program

**SUMMARY:** This bill requires the University of California, Davis (UCD) School of Veterinary Medicine to develop a program to assist in coordinating and training a network of government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals to care for household and domestic animals and livestock during emergencies. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes the California Veterinary Emergency Team program (CVET program). It requires UCD, School of Veterinary Medicine to develop a program to assist in the coordination and training of a network of government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals to care for household and domestic animals and livestock in emergencies, including disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation.
- 2) Requires the program to conduct or support research on best practices for the evacuation and care of animals in disasters.
- 3) Requires the university, the Secretary of California Food and Agriculture (CDFA), and the Director of Emergency Services (OES) to develop a memorandum of understanding for the university to consult with the secretary and the director regarding the coordination of the program's activities with the state's disaster response practices and the deployment of participants in the program's network during disasters.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Established the California Animal Response Emergency System (CARES) under the oversight of CDFA and incorporated into OES emergency planning. CARES is an operational guidance to assist with all aspects of animal care and control in the event of a disaster or emergency. In addition, CARES provides resources for the public, animal businesses, shelters, and emergency planners. CARES is structured in accordance with the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS).
- 2) Established the Standardized Emergency Management System to provide fundamental structure for the response phase of emergency management.
- 3) Established the California Veterinary Medical Reserve Corps (CVMRC) with the mission to preserve animal well-being and protect the public health and welfare by providing emergency veterinary medical care and expertise during the response phase of declared states of emergency. CVMRC deployment is voluntary.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown.

**COMMENTS:** Current law establishes the California Animal Response Emergency System (CARES) within the California Department of Food and Agriculture to manage the evacuation, sheltering and care of animals during disasters. CARES works with local agencies, nonprofit groups, and individual volunteers to accomplish this mission.

According to the author, “Recent disasters have shown that the state operation can at times be overwhelmed. It has faced a shortage of trained and equipped volunteers, including veterinarians. Twice in the past five years, California has had to request help from the Veterinary Emergency Team at Texas A&M University, which has traveled to California from Texas to assist us.

“This bill would establish a similar team at the University of California, Davis, School of Veterinary Medicine. The team would be available to respond to disasters anywhere in California, operating under a memorandum of understanding with CDFA and the Office of Emergency Services. Between disasters, the team would help CARES recruit, train, and drill volunteers, and it would conduct research and train veterinarians and veterinary students on best practices in shelter medicine and emergency medicine.

“UC Davis currently has a volunteer veterinary team – essentially a student club – that responds to disasters near the campus. But this team can only do short-term response because the students cannot leave their studies for extended periods, nor can the faculty who advise them. The California Veterinary Medical Association also coordinates volunteer veterinarians to serve this function, but they lack the infrastructure to recruit, train, and manage them in communities across the state. This is a function that requires a state presence, and UC Davis is uniquely situated to perform it.”

Supporters state, this bill would establish the California Veterinary Emergency Team, based on a successful program from Texas A&M University, to train nonprofit organizations, governmental agencies, and individuals to act as localized response teams to assist in these disasters with the evacuation and care of both domesticated and livestock animals. This Team would bring together disparate and fragmented groups and provide up to date training to effectively shelter evacuated animals and these teams would be available for deployment by the Office of Emergency Services.

#### **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

##### **Support**

California Professional Firefighters  
California Veterinary Medical Association  
Rover.com

##### **Opposition**

None on file.

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