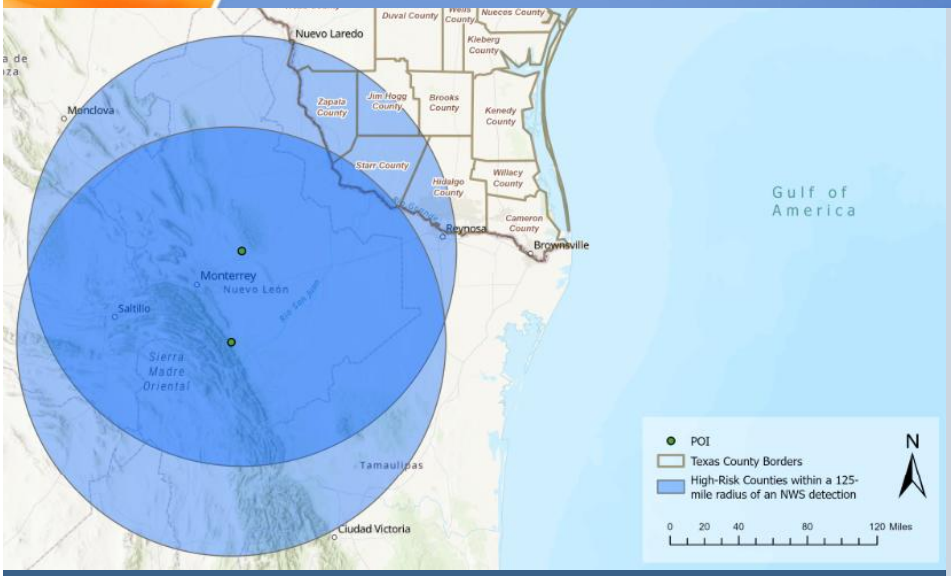
The Sentinel

Newsletter of the Florida State Agricultural Response Team



High-risk counties within a 125-mile radius of an NWS detection by the USDA.

Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Issues Emergency Rule to Further Protect Florida from Threat of New World Screwworm

As New World Screwworm (NWS) detections are now within 125 miles of the U.S. border, Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson took aggressive action last month to protect Florida. The issuance of an emergency rule places temporary restrictions on the importation of animals into Florida from high-risk counties in Texas.

These restrictions require all animals imported into Florida originating from a high-risk U.S. county to undergo increased veterinary screenings and treatment, if necessary.

"Today we are taking aggressive action to further protect Florida and our agricultural producers from the real threat of the New World Screwworm," said Commissioner Simpson. "We know how costly and dangerous this pest can be to our agricultural industry if it takes hold, and we will use every tool at our disposal to protect our state. We're also calling on Florida's producers, veterinarians, and animal health professionals to remain aware and act quickly if they suspect something unusual."

The emergency rule currently applies to the following U.S. counties:

- Zapata County, Texas
- Jim Hogg County, Texas
- Starr County, Texas
- Hidalgo County, Texas
- Webb County, Texas
- Brooks County, Texas

Import requirements continue on page 5.

Special Features of this Issue:

- *Florida's Ongoing Drought Heightens Wildfire Concerns*
- *Operation Florida Ready*
- *K9 Responder/Paramedic + K9-TECCC by K9 MEDIC*

"Today we are taking aggressive action to further protect Florida and our agricultural producers from the real threat of the New World Screwworm."

— Wilton Simpson
Commissioner of Agriculture
Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services

Florida's Ongoing Drought Heightens Wildfire Concerns

Florida is currently in the grip of its most significant drought in over 10 years, with dry conditions stretching across the entire state and pushing wildfire risk sharply higher. The most severe drought impacts are concentrated in 14 counties across North Florida and the Panhandle, but wildfires have been reported in every region. Recent fires in Putnam, Calhoun, and Hernando Counties scorched thousands of acres and destroyed multiple homes.

To better prepare for an active wildfire season, the Florida Forestry Service has increased its staffing and modernized its response fleet with new drones, helicopters, and bulldozers. Water management districts are also tightening or considering water-use restrictions to conserve dwindling water supplies and increase the water available to fight any wildfires that may start. While South Florida recently saw some relief thanks to heavy rainfall that boosted aquifer levels, rivers in North Florida remain extraordinarily low—some flowing at less than a quarter of their usual levels. Officials continue to monitor conditions closely and may introduce stricter measures if necessary.

Photo: Forest Fire

Nearly half of Florida is forested, making fire a natural part of the state's ecosystems—but also creating widespread vulnerability when conditions are dry. As Florida's population grows, more residents now live in the wildland-urban interface, where communities border wooded areas and face elevated wildfire risks.

Although Florida experiences more lightning than any other state, most wildfires here are sparked by human activity. With conditions this dry, prevention is key. Residents can help reduce risk by creating defensible space around their homes, burning yard debris responsibly, supporting prescribed fire efforts, and reporting suspicious activity or signs of wildfire early.

Staying aware and taking preventative steps will be especially important as Florida moves through what may become a challenging wildfire season.

Operation Florida Ready

Photo: Main floor of the Florida State Emergency Operations Center, Tallahassee, FL

With hurricane season quickly approaching, the Florida Division of Emergency Management—alongside representatives from each support agency—organized and facilitated "Operation Florida Ready" at the new State Emergency Operations Center in Tallahassee, Florida.

During this exercise, we had the valuable opportunity to work with our partners at the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS). Their representatives helped staff our newly updated Emergency Support Function (ESF)17 workspace, which now includes 15 total seats: 13 within the room and 2 on the operations floor.

ESF17 also provided two members from our regional team to support the Simulation Cell, the core component of the exercise responsible for mission generation and scenario progression.

This training allowed us to onboard several new team members and collaborate with our SART partners to practice and refine our deployment process.

Thank you to all who participated and contributed to the success of this exercise.

Photo: SERT ESF 17 Room number plate.

K-9 First Responder & Tactical Emergency Care Training

Photo: Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement officers speaking with Tactical instructor.

A big thank you to Sgt. Meyers and his team with the Florida National Guard Counterdrug Task Force at Camp Blanding Joint Training Center for hosting our seventh SART–sponsored K9 MEDIC Training.

We first partnered with K9 MEDIC in 2017 after identifying a significant gap in training related to providing first aid to our working canines. Jo Anne Brenner and her team of subject matter experts at K9 MEDIC has been developing their program since 2004, evolving alongside the K9 tactical medicine field, and were among the original authors of the K9 TECC (Tactical Emergency Casualty Care) protocol.

"By partnering with K9 MEDIC and the Florida National Guard, SART worked to bring an intense, hands-on training experience that focused on protecting and caring for canine first responders in the field, when a veterinarian or hospital isn't around."

— LeiAnna Moorhead
Emergency Programs Manager
ECO for ESF 17 and FLSART
Division of Animal Industry, FDACS

Photo: Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement officers in class.

The K9 MEDIC training program equips K9 handlers, medics, tactical medics, and support personnel with the medical skills needed to prevent and treat injuries and illnesses in working dogs. The program teaches human medical providers how to adapt their existing skills to canine patients, supports K9 handlers in expanding their medical awareness and capabilities, and helps veterinary professionals apply their expertise in pre hospital field environments.

This year, SART was proud to sponsor 23 handlers from a variety of multi-jurisdictional agencies and states. We were especially pleased to welcome three members of our own Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement (OALE), which has recently launched its new K9 handler program.

Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Issues Emergency Rule to Further Protect Florida from Threat of New World Screwworm (continued)

Import Requirements: Except where more stringent requirements are adopted herein, all animals being imported into Florida from a high-risk county must meet the movement requirements in Chapter 5C-3, F.A.C.

- All warm-blooded animals originating from a high-risk county being imported into Florida must be accompanied by an Official Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (OCVI) documenting that all animals listed on the OCVI have been inspected and found free of contagious and infectious disease and pests, including NWS. No alternative movement documents will be accepted in lieu of an OCVI.
    - The OCVI must include the statement, "All animals listed on the OCVI have been inspected and are free from screwworm larvae infestation."
    - The OCVI is valid for no more than 7 days from the date of veterinary inspection.
- All warm-blooded animals that have wounds that are **not infested** with NWS larvae can be imported into Florida provided that the following requirements are met:
    - Any animal with a wound must be treated using an effective treatment. The effective treatment must be administered by or directly overseen by an authorized representative or licensed veterinarian. The effective treatment for NWS must be administered in accordance with the following:
        - Oral or injected treatments must be administered no less than 12 hours and no more than 14 days prior to entry into Florida.
        - Systemic, topical treatments must be administered no less than 72 hours and no more than 14 days prior to entry into Florida.
    - In addition to receiving a systemic effective treatment, all animals with non-infested wounds must have the wounds topically treated with a product effective against NWS. The wound location and treatment must be documented on the OCVI.

FDACS is also urging veterinarians, livestock producers, and animal health professionals to remain vigilant as the threat of NWS reintroduction into the United States grows due to the pest's continued movement through Mexico.

Although there have been no detections in the U.S., FDACS is closely coordinating with federal and regional partners to monitor the situation. The New World Screwworm, a destructive parasite that targets warm-blooded animals, was eradicated from the U.S. more than four decades ago. Its return would pose a serious threat to livestock, wildlife, and domestic animals, particularly in states like Florida with warm climates and abundant animal populations.

Additional information on NWS is found on the following pages.

Photo: A New World screwworm fly. (USDA)

New World Screwworm

Story provided by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

New World screwworms are fly larvae (maggots) that can infest livestock and other warm-blooded animals, including people. They most often enter an animal through an open wound. They feed on the animal's living flesh and, if not treated, infestations can be fatal. While New World screwworm (*Cochliomyia hominivorax*) has not been widely present in the United States since the 1960s, it is still found in most of South America and in five Caribbean countries. Cases began spreading in 2023, heading north from Panama, and have reached southern Mexico, increasing the risk of reintroduction into the United States.

Signs

Screwworms are typically found on warm-blooded animals that have a draining or enlarging wound.

Screwworm eggs are creamy and white and deposited in a shingle-like manner on or near the edges of superficial wounds. The larvae are cylindrical with one pointed end and one blunt end and have rings of dark brown spines around the body. Female screwworm flies are larger than a housefly with a dark blue to blue-green body and reddish-orange head.

Almost any type of wound can become infested with screwworm larvae, including those caused by feeding ticks, castration, dehorning, branding, shearing, barbed wire fences, and even shedding of antler velvet in deer. The navels of newborn mammals can also become infested.

Guidance for Animal Health

Carefully inspect animal wounds and hides for signs of screwworm. Owners should immediately consult their veterinarian if a case of screwworm is suspected.

Continued, next page.

New World Screwworm (continued)

Story provided by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Treatment

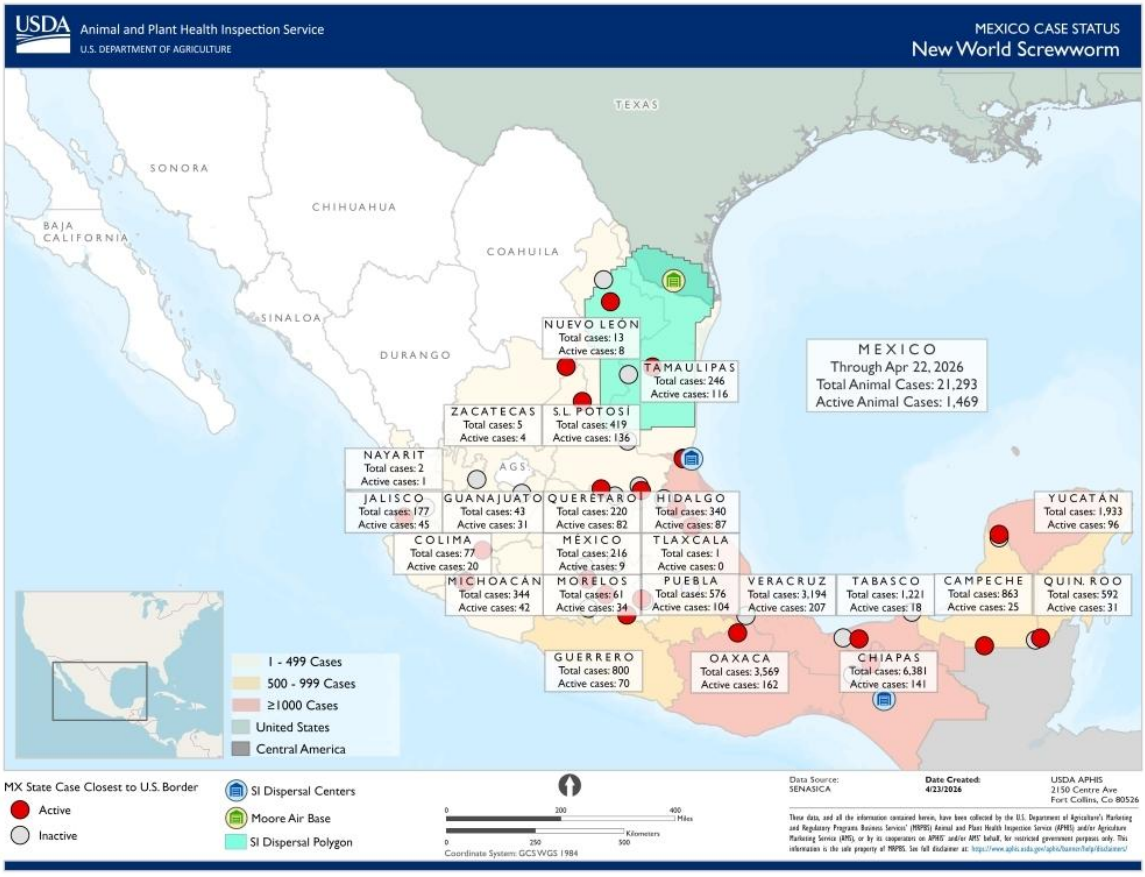
Screwworm infestation is treated by cleaning the site and topical application of a pesticide or other medication effective at killing the screwworm larvae. Treated wounds should be inspected daily until completely healed. The examining veterinarian will remove larvae from the wound with tweezers, place them in alcohol, and report to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Division of Animal Industry (State Veterinarian's Office).

Report Suspected Cases

- **By phone during office hours:** (850) 410-0900
- **By phone after hours:** 1-800-342-5869
- **Via email:** RAD@FDACS.gov
- **Report online at:** www.FDACS.gov/RAD

Wildlife Reports

To report sick or injured wildlife, including a suspected screwworm infestation, call the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) at 1-888-404-FWCC (3922) or email the Wildlife Health Team at WildlifeHealthTeam@MyFWC.com.



Source: USDA APHIS (Updated 4/26/2026)

New World Screwworm Resources

- Commissioner Wilton Simpson Issues Emergency Rule to Further Protect Florida From Threat of New World Screwworm
- USDA APHIS – Information on the Screwworm Eradication Program
- FDACS – New World Screwworm Information Page
- FDA – New World Screwworm Information for Veterinarians

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Small Animal Emergency Sheltering Training

Florida State Animal Response Coalition (FLSARC) provides Small Animal Emergency Sheltering training for Florida communities. These courses teach the unique procedures, skills, and knowledge necessary to build and operate a temporary emergency animal shelter in response to natural disasters and animal cruelty cases. These courses were created and designed by experts from many organizations including Florida SART, University of Florida Veterinary Emergency Treatment Service (VETS) Team, and leadership of FLSARC. This training is state-certified by the Florida Division of Emergency Management.

Awareness Level 1	Operations Level 2
• May 6, St. Lucie County • June 5, Seminole County • June 12, Miami-Dade County	• May 7, St. Lucie County • May 27, Sarasota County

To register, visit: https://flsarc.org/training-classes-events

ASAR Swiftwater Rescue & Boat Operations Training

Incidents that involve animals trapped in Flood and Swiftwater require special considerations and knowledge. This class covers both the ASAR Swiftwater Rescue skills and the ASAR Floodwater Boat Operations.
Dates: June 11th-13th and June 14th
Location: Lee County Animal Services; Fort Myers, FL
To register, visit: https://asartraining.com/event/asar-fort-myers-2026

SART Partners Meeting

There will not be a SART partners conference call in May 2026.

In the News…

- Commissioner Wilton Simpson Applauds USDA Issuing Disaster Declaration for Florida (FDACS)
- Commissioner Wilton Simpson Announces Permanent Protection of Nearly 2,600 Acres of Working Timberland (FDACS)
- Governor Ron DeSantis Signs Florida Farm Bill (FL Gov)
- FDA Issues Emergency Use Authorization for Topical Spray to Prevent and Treat New World Screwworm in Multiple Species, Including Cattle, Sheep, Goats, Horses, Wild and Exotic Mammals, Wild and Pet Birds (FDA)
- USDA Designates 61 Counties in Florida as Primary Natural Disaster Areas Due to Drought (USDA)

ASAR Swiftwater Rescue & Boat Operations Training

June 11th-14th, 2026

Daily start time 8am!

Lee County Animal Services
5600 Banner Dr
Fort Myers, FL 33912

For directions, questions regarding lodging, or other area accommodations, contact:
Pete Santana at
PSantana@leegov.com

To register go to: https://asartraining.com/event/asar-fort-myers-2026/ or scan the QR code.

Incidents that involve animals trapped in Flood and Swiftwater require special considerations and knowledge. This training is provided through both hands-on and classroom instruction. This class covers both the ASAR Swiftwater Rescue skills and the ASAR Floodwater Boat Operations. First responders with existing water rescue certification will receive additional certification that meets required FEMA USAR/TF animal rescue competencies. Small animal rescue techniques will be the primary focus, with additional discussion about large animal issues and hazards in floodwater. Participants need to have the ability to swim in moving water conditions.

Class Registration Fee: $650.00
Drysuit Rental (optional): $200.00
Class size limited to 30 people

Registration Deadline
June 6th, 2026

Course Topics include: Hazard Identification, Scene Management, Water Rescue Absolutes, Knots, Low Angle Rope, Mechanical Advantage, Swiftwater Operations, Floodwater Boat Operations, Self-Rescue, Team Rescue, Animal Restraint, Small Animal Rescue Field Practical and MUCH MORE!

Payment due at time of registration. Refunds: 10+ days prior to class = 100%; 5-10 days prior to class = 50%; 0-5 days prior to class = no refund.

Required PPE
Drysuit (Optional)
Water Rescue Helmet
Class V PFD with quick release strap
Water Gloves
Appropriate Footwear

www.asartraining.com

SART Offers Pet-Friendly Sheltering Online Training – Register Now!

The Pet-Friendly Sheltering Online Training is the first of its kind to be offered in Florida. The Training guidance to private, local, and state entities on how to plan for and operate a pet-friendly shelter to ensure that individuals evacuating from a disaster with their household pets are accommodated.

This training includes useful information on how to:

- Use the Incident Command System in pet-friendly shelter planning and operations;
- Plan for a pet-friendly shelter;
- Understand the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act (PETS Act);
- Establish partnerships for resource coordination;
- Deliver a unified message for resource coordination;
- Deliver a unified message to the public before, during, and after an emergency, and;
- Set up, operate, and demobilize a pet-friendly shelter.

Paula Carroll

Jefferson County, Florida

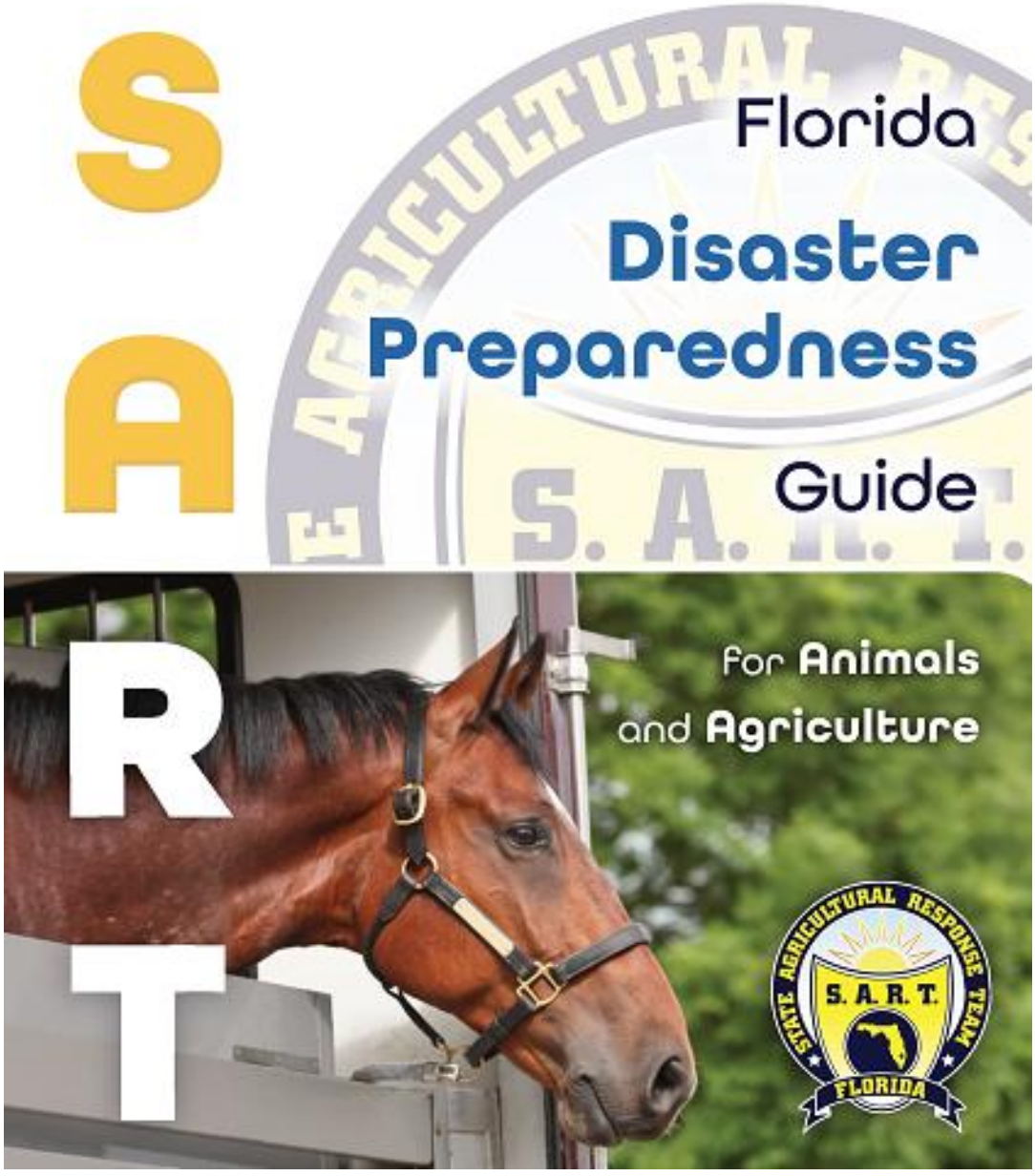
"I feel that with this training we will succeed... I am much more equipped."

The four-hour course is designed for emergency managers, county employees, veterinary and animal services, and shelter volunteers. There is no charge for this 100% online course. For more information, please visit www.FLSART.org.

The Florida Disaster Preparedness Guide for Animals and Agriculture

The Florida Disaster Preparedness Guide for Animals and Agriculture was developed by FDACS and Florida SART. This guide explores the various animal and agricultural sectors in the state of Florida that are at risk from natural and man-made disasters, and what you can do to help prepare and protect animals and agriculture before a disaster strikes. The recommendations and resources in this guide are applicable to preparing for all hazards such as hurricanes, floods, wildfires, disease introduction, hazardous material spills, and more.

This publication is available only to SART members. To access the Florida Disaster Preparedness Guide for Animals and Agriculture, visit the SART website at flsart.org, and navigate to the "Resources" tab. It may also be accessed directly at:
https://flsart.org/resource/DisasterPreparednessGuides/DisasterPreparednessGuides.jsp



Become a Volunteer of the Florida Veterinary Corps Today!

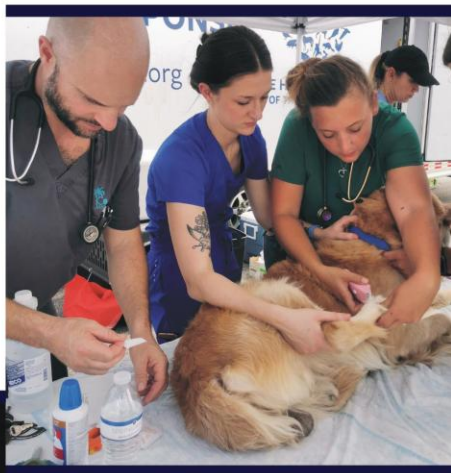
Florida veterinarians and veterinary technicians have volunteered to assist local and state emergency management officials in responding to animal emergencies. The Florida Veterinary Corps is recruiting more volunteers to help protect our state.

Become A Volunteer

To apply to the Florida Veterinary Corps, visit **www.FLSART.org**

Florida Veterinary Corps

Safeguarding Animal and Public Health in Florida



A cooperative effort of the Florida State Agricultural Response Team and its Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Florida Veterinary Medical Association, and University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine.

Florida Veterinary Corps

What is the Florida Veterinary Corps?

- The Florida Veterinary Corps (The Corps) is a component of the Florida State Agricultural Response Team (SART), established within the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and a cooperative effort with the Florida Veterinary Medical Association and the University of Florida, College of Veterinary Medicine.
- The Corps has been established to enlist veterinarians and veterinary technicians who are willing to volunteer their services in responding to animal emergencies in the state of Florida.
- During activation, Corps volunteers will work within an Incident Command System structure under state Emergency Support Function 17 as part of the State Emergency Response Team.
- Corps volunteers will be kept informed as to the status of emergencies and the need for volunteers depending upon the specific emergency.
- Volunteers may serve in veterinary infrastructure assessment teams, triage or emergency animal treatment teams, and animal disease surveillance or control teams under an Incident Command System structure.

Obligation of Corps Volunteers

- Corps volunteers will serve only when activated within an Incident Command System structure under state Emergency Support Function 17 as part of the State Emergency Response Team and adhere to all state regulations and rules.
- Complete the following four Incident Command System trainings to apply for The Corps. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides the independent study courses online, free of charge. The training is required for credentialing of emergency responders by the Department of Homeland Security. The courses are critical to train a professional volunteer Corps capable of responding as part of the state Emergency Support Function 17 and State Emergency Response Team.
  - IS-100.C: Introduction to the Incident Command System (ICS)
  - IS-200.C: Basic ICS for Initial Response
  - IS-700.B: An Introduction to the National Incident Management System (NIMS)
  - IS-800.D: National Response Framework, An Introduction
- Corps volunteers will only be activated in response to specific emergency situations and may decline service at any time.

Rationale

- Protecting animal agriculture and household pets in Florida begins locally and requires cooperation, participation, and partnership.
- Federal or other outside assistance to deal with an animal disease emergency may not be available for hours or days.
- Animal agriculture in Florida is highly vulnerable to severe disruption and financial loss through natural disasters and exotic or zoonotic diseases.
- Counties and state agencies must be prepared to respond to animal disasters through planning and identification of human and material resources.
- Natural disasters are unpredictable and cannot be prevented.
- Florida has a high risk for introduction of a foreign animal disease.

Become a Volunteer

To apply to the Florida Veterinary Corps, visit **www.FLSART.org**

Be Sure to Check Out the FDACS and UF IFAS Partnership Video

Florida SART, FDACS, and University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) teamed up to create a training video on their disaster response partnership.

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

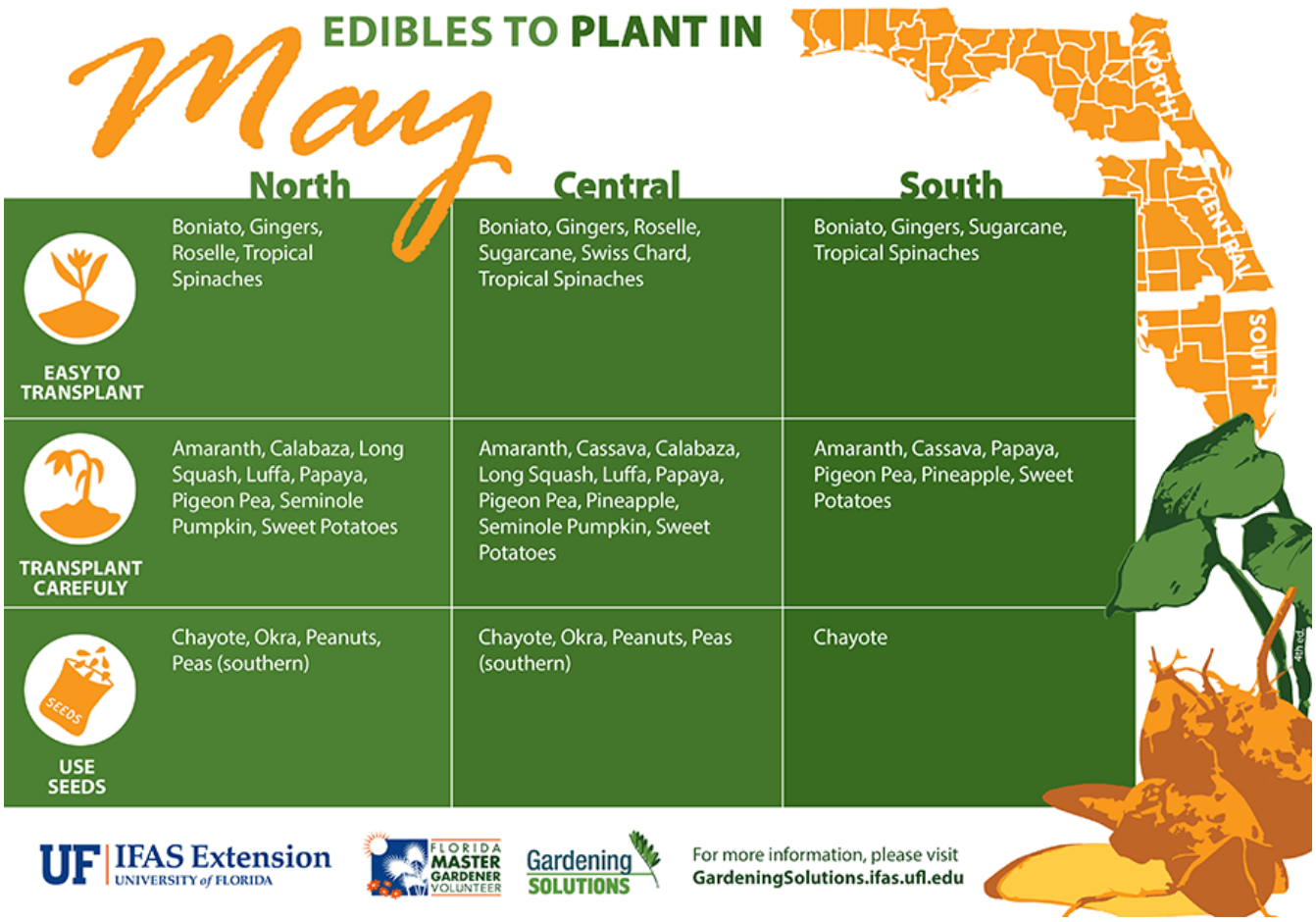
UF IFAS UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

Published in December 2022 on YouTube, the video features interviews with LeiAnna Moorhead (FDACS Emergency Programs Manager), Dr. Saqib Mukhtar (UF/IFAS Associate Dean for Extension, Agriculture, and Natural Resources), and Dr. Angie Lindsey [Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN)].

EDEN is funded by the USDA and is a collaborative multi-state effort by cooperative extension services across the country to improve the delivery of services to citizens affected by disasters.

Dr. Lindsey highlighted the important connection that agricultural extension agents have throughout the State of Florida. "We learn so much from our Extension agents and the work that they're already doing throughout the state and the work that they do within their own communities for disaster preparedness, recovery, and response," said Dr. Lindsey.

To view the video for yourself, and to like or comment, please visit:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SI1Xsjd-FCw



UF/IFAS Florida Gardening Calendars

The Gardening Calendar publications on the UF/IFAS Solutions for Your Life website gives Florida gardeners a monthly guide for what to plant and do in their gardens and includes links to useful gardening websites, all based on University of Florida research and expertise. Three different editions of the calendar provide specific tips for each of Florida's climate zones—North, Central, and South.

What to Plant in May - University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (ufl.edu)

Counties, Is Your Contact Information up to date on the SART Website?

Please review your county emergency contact information at: https://flsart.org/resource/countyinformation.jsp.

If you need to make changes to your county contact information, please send a request to LeiAnna Moorhead at LeiAnna.Moorhead@FDACS.gov. During an emergency, ESF 17 and SART provides necessary food and water to affected areas to help protect animals, agriculture, and pets.

Food Safety and Food Defense Report

A special section dedicated to feed and food emergency planning and response.

FDACS Division of Food Safety is responsible for assuring the public of a safe, wholesome, and properly represented food supply through permitting and inspection of food establishments, inspection of food products, and performance of specialized laboratory analysis on a variety of food products sold or produced in the state. The Division of Food Safety monitors food from the farm gate, through processing and distribution, to the retail point of purchase.

Spring Food Safety

Get springtime off to a fresh start with our cleaning tips.

SART Resources and Links

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza – USDA APHIS Flock Defender
https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/defend-the-flock-program/outbreak-illness/outbreak-illness

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Dairy Cattle
https://ccmedia.fdacs.gov/content/download/115892/file/2024-HPAI-Dairy-Cattle-Announcement.pdf

Large Animal Incident Response Plan Template
https://flsart.org/resource/TLAER

Pet Sheltering Resources
https://flsart.org/resource/petshelter

Ask IFAS: Disaster Preparedness and Recovery
https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/entity/topic/disaster_preparedness_and_recovery

SART Response Equipment List and Request Information
https://flsart.org/resource/equipmentrequest.jsp

FDEM Vector Control Quick Guide
https://flsart.org/pdf/Vector%20Control%20Quick%20Guide.pdf

Please log in and update your membership information online at:

www.FLSART.org

About the *SART Sentinel*

The *SART Sentinel* is an email newsletter prepared monthly by the members of the **Florida State Agricultural Response Team** on the Florida SART website at www.FLSART.org.

If you have a story or photo that you would like to have considered for publication in the *SART Sentinel*, please contact the editors.

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