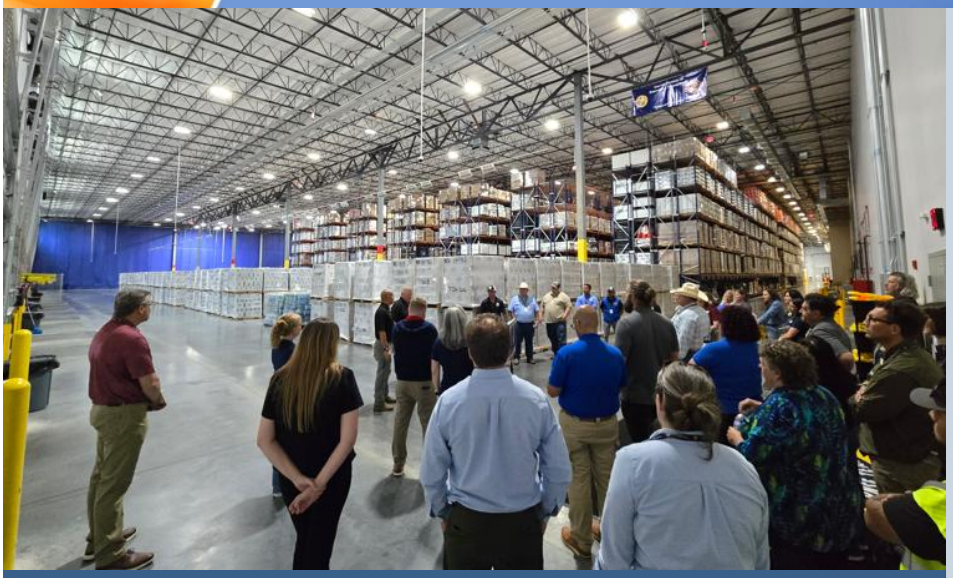
The Sentinel

Newsletter of the Florida State Agricultural Response Team



Stakeholders tour the Florida Central Operations and Coordination Office on May 12th.

Florida Wraps Up National Veterinary Stockpile Tabletop and Vaccine Workshop Exercises in Auburndale

Florida has wrapped up a tabletop exercise designed to test how well the state would handle a potential foreign animal disease outbreak. Over three days, from May 12 to 14, 2026, a group of stakeholders gathered at the Florida Central Operations and Coordination Office (COCO) to walk through the logistics of managing a crisis like Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD).

The event brought together the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Florida State Agricultural Response Team (SART), the Florida Division of Emergency Management, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Their goal was straightforward: to validate the state's National Veterinary Stockpile (NVS) logistics plan. Rather than just talking about it, the group met in person to go over exactly how they would request, receive, store, and distribute veterinary counter-measures if an emergency ever struck.

The team kept in mind the real-world stakes—an FMD outbreak could hit domestic markets hard and disrupt international trade. On May 13, participants spent time in a workshop refining how they would monitor temperatures and receive vaccines at facilities, making sure the supplies stayed effective during a rush deployment.

The next morning, attendees ran through the tabletop exercise simulation, using an FMD scenario to see how well policies, executive orders, and IT systems worked together across different agencies. As the hours ticked by, the discussion shifted from theoretical planning to the details of execution.

Continued, next page.

Special Features of this Issue:

- *The 2026 Atlantic Hurricane Season Is Here: Are You Ready?*
- *Scheduled: ASAR Swiftwater Rescue & Boat Operations Training*
- *Hurricane Season Food Safety Tips*

"That's what this is all about – building partnerships and sharing resources to respond as efficiently and effectively together so that we can best protect Florida's agriculture industry and consumers"

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

Florida Wraps Up National Veterinary Stockpile Tabletop and Vaccine Workshop Exercises in Auburndale (continued)

Florida Central Operations and Coordination Office (COCO) in Auburndale, Florida.

Participants had to grapple with realistic hurdles, such as how to quickly secure a cold-chain storage facility when one wasn't immediately available, or how to coordinate transport when roads were potentially congested by other emergency traffic. These moments forced the group to confront the gaps between their written plans and the messy reality of a fast-moving crisis, highlighting where communication lines might snag or where authority could become unclear.

By the time the final session wrapped up on the morning of May 14, the atmosphere had shifted from cautious preparation to constructive critique. The team didn't just leave with a list of "what ifs"; they walked away with concrete action items. Some of which included identifying additional state facilities with refrigeration capabilities to facilitate veterinary countermeasure staging and distribution at scale, and developing workflows and standard operating procedures for the inventory management of all veterinary countermeasures received. The exercise served as a necessary stress test, revealing that even well-intentioned plans need regular tuning to stay effective.

Looking ahead, the insights gathered in Auburndale will feed directly into the state's broader emergency preparedness strategy. The organizers emphasized that this wasn't a one-off event but part of an ongoing cycle of improvement. As LeiAnna Moorhead, ECO for ESF 17 and the Florida SART, noted during the exercise, the true value lies in the relationships built and the trust established between the various stakeholders. "We walked away from the exercise with an extensive list of additional resources from all participating agencies, which we will incorporate into our state's ESF 17 NVS Logistics Annex. That's what this is all about – building partnerships and sharing resources to respond as efficiently and effectively together so that we can best protect Florida's agriculture industry and consumers," said Tucker.

With these updates in place, Florida aims to ensure that if a real threat ever emerges, the response will be as seamless and coordinated as the team practiced over those three days.

The 2026 Atlantic Hurricane Season Is Here: Are You Ready?

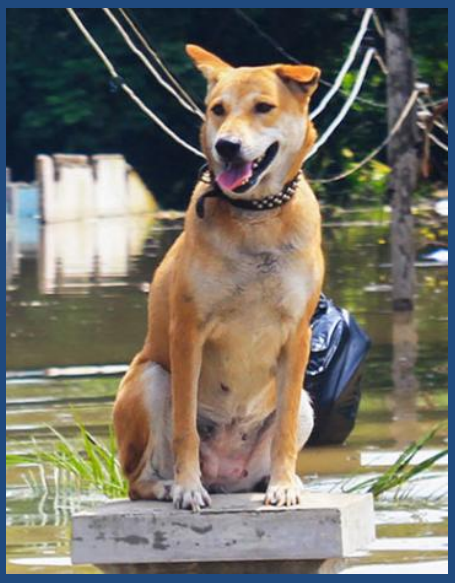
Hurricane season in Florida starts June 1st and continues through November 30th. While most hurricanes make landfall between August and October there is always a chance for an early or late-in-the-season storm to be at Florida's doorstep.

Now is a great time to start preparing for the next storm. The best place to start is by making a plan for your family and animals. Making a plan can be challenging, so visit our SART Florida Disaster Preparedness Guide for recommendations and resources for creating a plan for animals and agriculture. Be sure to include preparation checklists, medical information, care instructions, and directions to your local shelter.

Connect with your county emergency management to gain information about severe weather alerts, local evacuation shelters if you and your animals need a safe place to shelter from the storm, evacuation zones ("Know Your Zone"), water distribution, hot meal feeding locations, and more hurricane response resources. You can find your county emergency management contact information on our Florida SART Website, then click 'County Contacts.'

Another way to learn information about hurricane preparedness and response efforts is through the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) website and following them on social media.

Please remember to stay safe, make a plan, and purchase those preparedness items if possible. When the next hurricane makes landfall will you be ready?



Find your county emergency management contact information at: FLSART.org

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.

Important Notice: June 1, 2026

Florida NWS High-Risk County Emergency Rule: All warm-blooded animals in a U.S. county within 125 miles of a New World screwworm (NWS) detection in Mexico must comply with additional Florida import requirements. This rule applies to all warm-blooded animals, including dogs and cats.

Emergency NWS Rule 24-2026

This emergency rule currently pertains to the following counties in the state of Texas:

- Bandera
- Brewster
- Brooks
- Crockett
- Dimmit
- Duval
- Edwards
- Frio
- Hidalgo
- Jim Hogg
- Kinney
- La Salle
- Maverick
- Medina
- Pecos
- Real
- Starr
- Terrell
- Uvalde
- Val Verde
- Webb
- Zapata
- Zavala

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
• June 5, Seminole County • June 12, Miami-Dade County • July 11, Palm Beach County • August 29, Citrus County • September 12-13, Online Virtual • October 3, Taylor County	• August 8-9, Palm Beach 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

The next SART Partners Meeting is to be announced.

In the News…

- Commissioner Wilton Simpson, State Leaders Highlight Current Wildfire Conditions, Urge Residents to Be Wildfire Ready (FDACS)
- APHIS Announces Funding to Support Chronic Wasting Disease Control and Prevention (USDA)
- Keep guests safe, not sick: Avoid foodborne illnesses at your summer barbecue with these expert tips (UF/IFAS)
- Hurricane Preparedness for Florida Farms: Weathering the Storm Together (UF/IFAS)

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.

Tina Kimmett

Clemson University

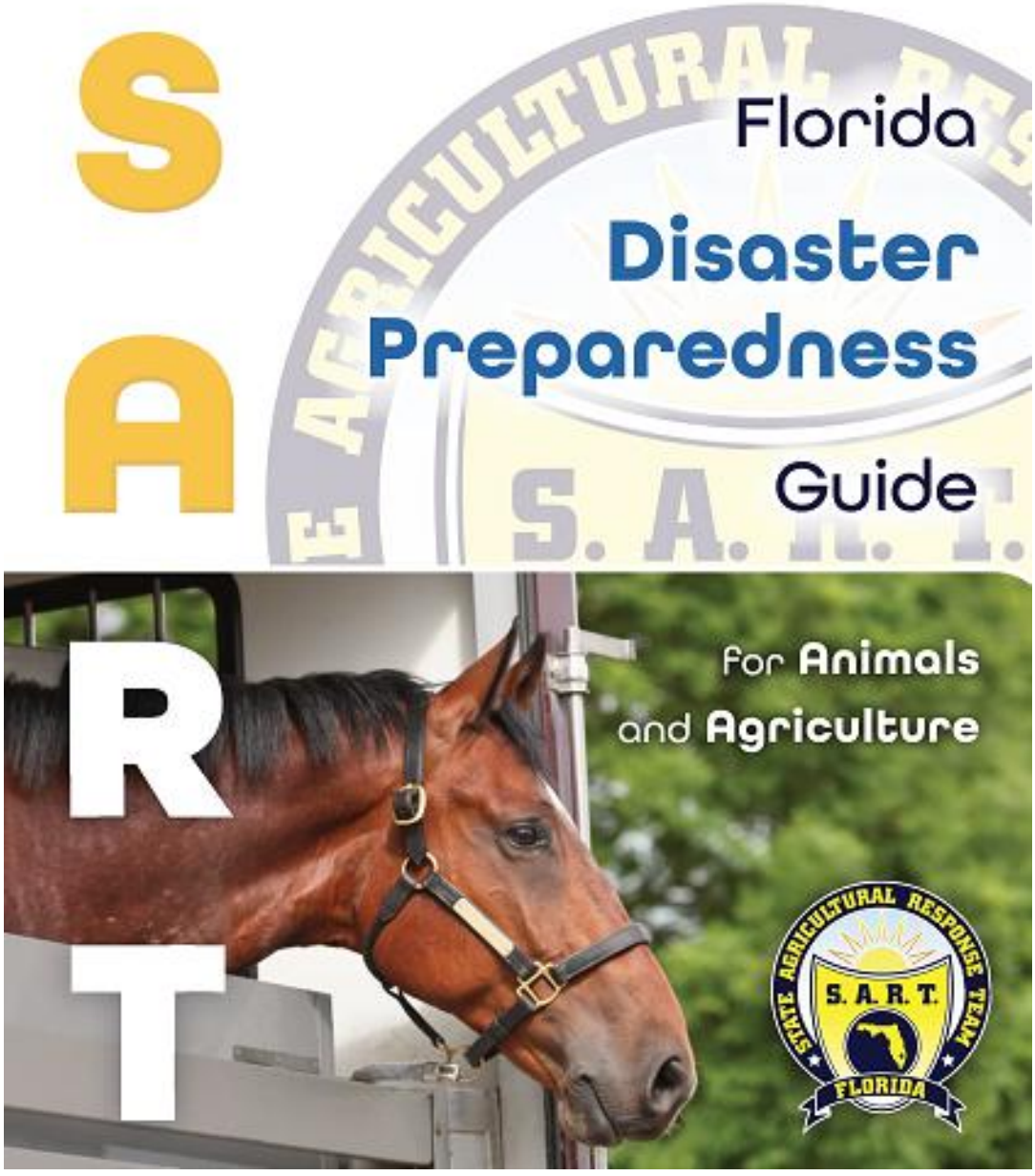
"This training has solidified my understanding of pet-friendly sheltering and I am more confident in my ability to help others after learning how the concepts can be and have been practically applied. I highly recommend this training."

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!

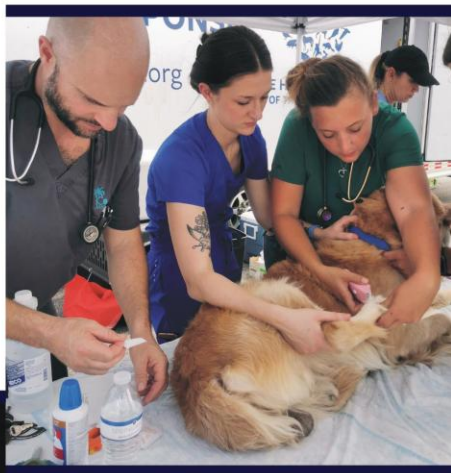
Florida veterinarians and veterinary technicians have volunteered to assist local and state emergency management officials in responding to animal emergencies. The Florida Veterinary Corps is recruiting more volunteers to help protect our state.

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

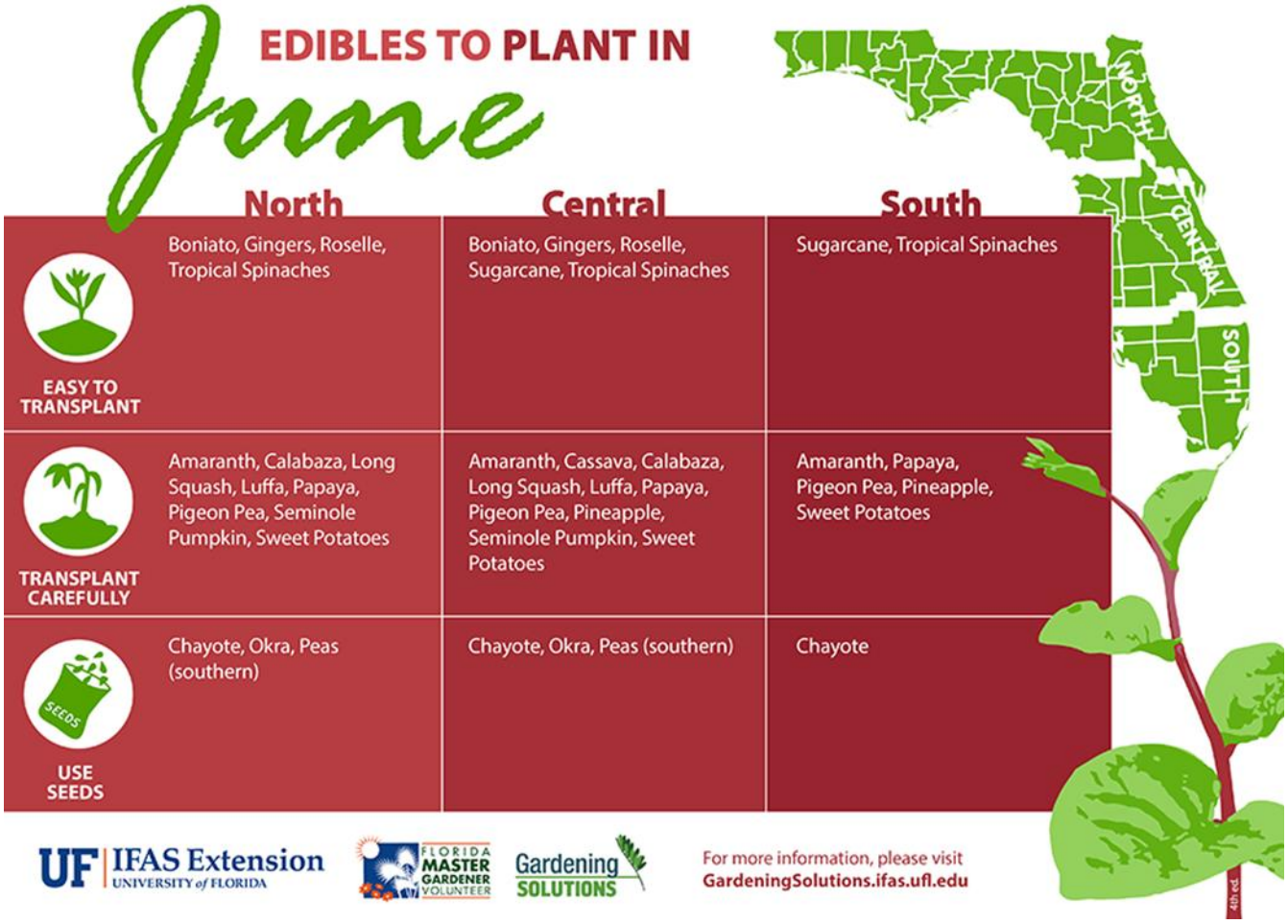
UF IFAS UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

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 June - 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.

Hurricane Season Food Safety Tips

Follow these tips to protect yourself, your family and your pets from foodborne illness in the event of a storm.

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.

Editing Services: The Turner Network, LLC under contract with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
E-mail: flsart@turnernetwork.com

Associate Editor: LeiAnna Moorhead, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
E-mail: LeiAnna.Moorhead@FDACS.gov