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## Animals Forgotten In Disaster Plans

**NZPA Wellington**  
Veterinarians are worried about the lack of planning for animals in a nuclear winter.

The Veterinary Association president, Dr Roger Marchant, said the association had for some time been investigating planning requirements for farm animals and urban pets in a disaster, including a nuclear disaster.

It had become obvious that none of the authorities responsible had seriously considered this, he said. It was an oversight in a country with over 80 million animals and barely 3 million people.

Urban pets would face a major problem in any disaster involving serious food shortages, he said.

Contingency plans should exist to determine when food was restricted to human consumption, and how pets were coped with after that.

It would be inhumane to let pet animals starve, and dangerous to leave large groups of hungry animals loose to fend for them-

selves. Dogs would tend to form marauding packs, he said.

Another major concern to veterinarians, so far overlooked by planning authorities, was assigning priority for drugs in short supply.

If the human population was to be fed in a prolonged disaster, such as a nuclear winter, the health of food-producing animals would need to be ensured.

This would require a significant allocation of a range of drugs used for both animals and humans.

It was not generally realised that animals in New Zealand consumed more drugs than people and many of those drugs were common to both groups, Dr Marchant said.

Plans should also exist to ensure the rational use of drugs held by veterinarians in the event of national or major regional disaster.

The potential use of veterinarians as a skilled resource in time of disaster was also important.

Veterinarians were second only to doctors in terms of medical skills.

They had a highly developed network of well equipped and staffed medical and surgical facilities, with over 400 veterinary clinics and hospitals, said Dr Marchant.

"To ignore such a major resource in a national or major regional disaster is foolhardy." Dr Marchant said the association would continue to plan for natural and nuclear disasters, and would also press the appropriate organisations to plan effective priorities for animals.

He said the Veterinary Association hoped that individuals and organisations interested in animal as well as human concerns would make submissions to the planning council, which recently published its study, New Zealand after Nuclear War.