



# San Diego Humane Society and SPCA

*Animal Rescue Reserve - A Volunteer Unit*  
5500 Gaines Street, San Diego, California 92110-2572  
Dispatch: 619.299.7012 extension 2222 Fax: 619.299.0198

## ANIMAL RESCUE RESERVE

When disaster strikes, people are often unable to transport their horses, other livestock, and even household pets to safety. This is why the San Diego Humane Society and SPCA organized the Animal Rescue Reserve in 1970, now a part of the official County Disaster Team. Specially trained to save and care for animals threatened by wildfires, floods, and other life-threatening situations, these unique volunteers are available seven days a week, 24 hours a day!

During any natural disaster, the San Diego Humane Society and SPCA works closely with local authorities to coordinate safe and efficient rescue efforts. In the event of wild fires, our Animal Rescue Reserve Volunteers work directly with the California Department of Forestry. With their authorization, Animal Rescue Reserve Volunteers and staff work in areas the regular citizens are prohibited to enter. This enables us to rescue animals whose owners are unable to reach them – it also helps other authorities concentrate on saving human lives and property.

Our Animal Rescue Reserve (ARR) is made up of four units. Each unit handles specific duties, helping us work as efficiently as possible during disasters.

**COMMAND STAFF** is comprised of the Animal Rescue Reserve Commander (an Officer from the Law Enforcement / Investigations Department), Assistant Commander and Lieutenants from *OPERATIONS*, *MOBILE* and *RECEIVING*. The Assistant Commander and Lieutenants are experienced volunteers.

**OPERATIONS** is made up of Scouts, Communications and Support Staff.

The Scouts are the first ARR volunteers called out in a fire emergency. They know the county's geography, and are especially familiar with the back-country and livestock populations. They assess the situation, call needed mobile units and advise the best routes to take to the scene. Scouts are required to respond any time of the day or night.

Communications volunteers work as information liaisons during emergencies. As licensed amateur radio operators, they're able to relay vital information regarding any necessary details to successfully complete our rescues.

Our **MOBILE** unit evacuates animals to pre-determined, safe areas during an emergency. Responsible for transporting the animals by trucks and trailers, these volunteers know and are capable of handling horses and other livestock.

The volunteers assigned to our **RECEIVING** unit accompany mobile units to move animals out of threatened areas to safety, and temporarily care for rescued animals during fires and floods. They identify each animal and help keep track of ownership information. These volunteers also feed and care for the rescued animals, and arrange for any necessary emergency medical treatment.

Some emergencies require us to transport rescued animals to the San Diego Humane Society and SPCA's special facility for large animals. There, animals are sheltered and tended to by Society employees and volunteers until the emergency has passed and the animals' legal owner can reclaim them.

The Animal Rescue Reserve has been called on to assist animals in many different ways – remove animals from fires or flooded areas, rescue large animals who have fallen into wells, mud bogs, swimming pools, ravines, etc., round-up and



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care for cattle involved in trailer transport accidents, and provide help for wildlife and small domestic animals. ARR volunteers also assist our Humane Officers with criminal cases, during impounds of groups of abused or neglected animals.

All members have prior experience in the unit they are interested in, but most of all **must have large animal experience**. ARR provides training for all of its members. This training is designed to create awareness of safety procedures, which help protect the volunteers and the animals they help, but most of all... to work as a team.

Some examples of the training provided are:

- California Department of Forestry trains about wild land fires and safety practices.
- First-Aid for animals and transporting injured animals (taught by a veterinarian).
- Handling of wild animals.
- Training about unusual animals which may be encountered – llamas, buffalos, etc.
- Various law enforcement personnel discuss their roles in emergencies and how we work with their agencies.
- Classes are provided on how to identify, handle, load, and unload horses from trailers, how to transport animals properly, and how to “drive” a trailer.

## **Background Checks**

A background packet is given to potential applicants. It is similar to a law enforcement packet, that consist of a Personal History Statement, and additional forms and waivers. This is required because of the job duties expected of the members. Although members of ARR have no police powers, they receive their orders from the Law Enforcement / Investigations Department. They assist Humane Officers for impounds of abused and/or neglected animals. When ARR responds to fires and search warrants, they are allowed to enter restricted areas and private properties, under the supervision of a Humane Officer. ARR volunteers are trusted to handle animals as evidence of a crime while the animals are in protective custody. In addition, being part of the County Disaster Preparedness Team, under the Department of Animal Services, ARR members must go through a background check for liability reasons. A background check determines the suitability and stability of an individual. It also consists of criminal, driving and credit history checks. Past and present employers and references will be contacted to help determine your character. We look for honesty, credibility and integrity in individuals who can represent the San Diego Humane Society and SPCA. It is also expected that the members of ARR may be called to testify in civil and criminal court as well.

To see what positions are available, please visit the San Diego Humane Society and SPCA website. Click on the “Programs” tab, then click on the “Animal Rescue Reserve” link on the left column (<http://www.sdhumane.org/programs/animalrescuereserve.cfm>).



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## **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP**

All members are required to purchase and provide their own approved uniforms and equipment, and must be maintained.

All potential applicants must have experience in the unit they are applying for, such as:

- Horses handling and breed identification for the “Mobile Rescue and Receiving Units”
- Use of a two-way radio for the “Scouts Unit”
- Driving and handling their personal truck and horse trailer for the “Mobile Rescue”

### **Part I: Prior to acceptance into the Animal Rescue Reserve**

1. Attend a volunteer orientation held at the San Diego Humane Society Shelter.
2. Complete the initial Animal Rescue Reserve application.

**NOTE:** *Steps 1 and 2 must be completed before proceeding.*

3. Interview with an Interview Panel.
4. If accepted to proceed, fill out a Background Packet and return it the ARR Commander in 30 days. When Packet is returned, you may begin your Probation period.
5. Interview with the ARR Commander.

### **Part II: After acceptance into the Animal Rescue Reserve**

During the **Probation** period, you are expected to the following:

- Successfully pass the background check.
- Must attend monthly training held on a weekend for 6 months.
- Communicate with your Probation Coordinator or Mentor.
- Successfully pass all hands-on and/or written tests prior to being released from probation.

**NOTE:** *A deposit for an ARR pager (Payable to the “San Diego Humane Society and SPCA”) is required as part of your membership.*

### **Part III: As an active member with the Animal Rescue Reserve**

As an **active** member, if you miss more than three consecutive trainings/meetings, your membership will be under consideration for termination without just cause.

- Have all equipment and uniforms.
- Must attend monthly meetings and/or trainings.
- Respond to call-outs and to various activities.
- Participate as a team player.