

WOAH workshop on Response Plan Development for Disaster Management and Risk Reduction

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World Organisation
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1. Tell us about the current status of your contingency/response plan.

- Greece has recently formalized its approach to protecting animals during disasters through Circular issued on June 2024. This directive mandates veterinary authorities to identify risks, map animal facilities/farms, collaborate with NGOs and other services, and prepare temporary relocation and rescue capabilities. The plan is decentralized and implemented through the Regions and Regional Units.
- Its guidance was actively applied during Attica fire on August 2024, earthquakes in Santorini island on February 2025 and wildfires on the island of Chios started on 22 June 2025 , where livestock losses occurred (e.g., 2 cattle on one farm, 8 on another, and 108 sheep on a third).
- However, many animals had already been moved to summer grazing areas, while in other cases, farmers and firefighters managed to release animals before fire reached the enclosures, saving them—a practice explicitly permitted by the circular.



2. What frameworks, laws, or policies influence how your plan is developed and activated?

- Law 4662/2020: Governs national civil protection mechanisms.
- Circular 223-177764-19.6.24: Core veterinary disaster directive emphasizing animal protection, logistical planning, and multi-agency coordination.
- WOAHA guidelines: Provide the scientific and ethical basis for emergency animal welfare, especially as highlighted in the Lisbon WOAHA Platform meeting (Jan 2024).
- Sendai Framework: Influences policy direction toward disaster risk reduction and resilience, including for animals and livelihoods.

3. What are the main hazards or risks involving animals in your country, and how do these inform your planning?

- Wildfires: Increasingly frequent and intense (Evros 2023, Attica 2024, Chios 2025).



- Floods: Like those in Thessaly (Daniel storm 2023) with severe livestock losses.



- Earthquakes and snowstorms in high-risk zones. (Santorini 2025)
- Animal diseases (avian flu, West Nile virus).
- The Chios wildfire case showed the critical role of pre-positioning animals to safer summer pastures and having coordination between farmers and first responders to allow time for emergency release and evacuation.

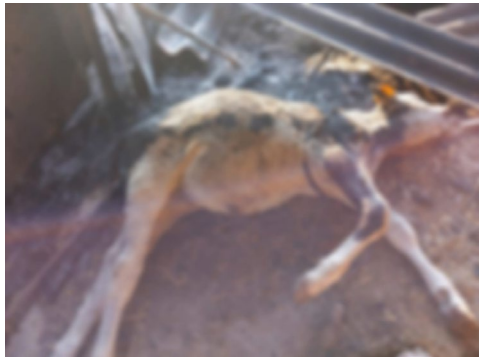
4. Can you share recent experiences with disasters involving animals and the lessons learned?

Earthquakes in Santorini island on February 2025

- The CCA communicated with the Veterinary Services (VS) of the Regional Unit for the implementation of the Circular
- Donkeys were moved to safer places and people stayed in the island to take care of them, feed and water them during all the period that the earthquake activity lasted.



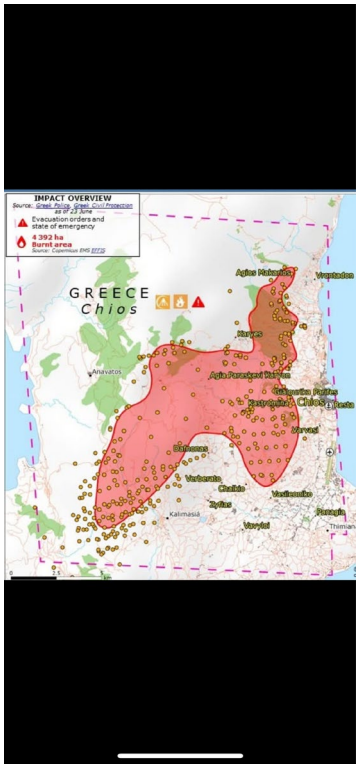
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In the Chios wildfires (June 22, 2025):

- 2 cattle, 8 cattle, and 108 sheep were lost on three separate farms.
- Most livestock had already been moved to summer grazing areas, avoiding worse outcomes.
- In other burned farms, animals were freed by farmers and firefighters just before the fire arrived, and many survived.
- This is a direct implementation of Section 15 of the circular, which states:
 - “In case of immediate need to rescue animals... by releasing them or transporting them to a predetermined animal collection area, the procedures provided for by EU and National legislation do not apply.”
- The key lesson: empowering local actors to take urgent action—in coordination with veterinary services and first responders—can significantly reduce animal losses.

5. How is your organization preparing its workforce for animal-related emergency response?



The circular requires:

- Designated veterinary liaisons in each Region (submitted by 30/06/2024).
- Mapping of animal farms and creation of support networks.
- Lists of trained personnel, private vets, and NGOs to assist in rescue and triage.
- The Chios event underscored the importance of readiness at the local level, where local farmers, firefighters, and regional veterinary officers played key roles in saving animals.

6. How do you reflect and learn from emergencies?

Recent events are beginning to be treated as learning opportunities:

- Acting early is key factor on preventing the worst during emergencies.
- The Chios wildfire will serve as a case study for emergency response effectiveness, especially on farm-level decision-making and coordination.
- The circular encourages data sharing and operational coordination, creating a foundation for post-event analysis, although systematic After Action Reviews are still developing.

7. What expectations do people such as animal owners, farmers, NGOs, and vets have of your organization during emergencies?

Expectations include:

- Early warning and farm-level communication.
- Official support for moving or releasing animals.
- Coordination with emergency responders.
- Chios farmers responded proactively, saving many animals. This demonstrated alignment between public expectations and circular guidelines, especially regarding emergency animal release protocols, which were legally and practically supported in this case.

8. What role do public/private partnerships play in your disaster planning and response?

Circular 223-177764-19.6.24 calls for:

- Partnerships with NGOs, private vets, volunteer associations.
- Identification of animal transporters, feed suppliers, water providers, and licensed slaughterhouses.
- In Chios, cooperation between farmers and local firefighters was critical. Future planning could formalize these ad hoc partnerships into structured local agreements or Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs).

9. In what ways is recovery planning considered or integrated into your response approach?

The circular mandates:

- Animal assembly areas post-evacuation.
- Provision of water, food, and shelter, considering bio-security and epidemiology.
- Veterinary care and triage support for injured animals.
- Emergency slaughter and disposal protocols.
- Recovery was immediate and partial in Chios. While animals were saved, no formal shelters were used—highlighting a gap in recovery infrastructure that the circular tries to address.

10. Looking ahead, what strengths can your country contribute to others, and what specific challenges are you hoping this workshop will help you address?

Strengths:

- A new, clear veterinary disaster response policy (June 2024).
- Field-level experience, such as in Chios 2025, where coordinated actions prevented greater losses.
- High veterinary professionalism and active NGO support.

Challenges:

- Turning policy into training, drills, and operational capacity.
- Building logistical readiness (e.g., shelters, feed depots, transport).
- Ensuring rural communities and first responders are fully informed and supported.

This workshop can offer Greece tools for:

- Developing cross-sector simulations and exercises.
- Designing mobile veterinary response units.
- Building public-private emergency supply chains.

Thank you

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