

Extras

[The Mix](#)

[E the people](#)

[Stocks & Finance](#)

[Health](#)

[Weather](#)

Services

[Search The Web](#)

[Web Directory](#)

[Yellow Pages](#)

[White Pages](#)

[Meet Someone](#)

[My Page](#)

[City Guide](#)

[Lottery Results](#)

[Weather](#)

[TV Listings](#)

[Movie Listings](#)

[Maps/Directions](#)

[Travel Info](#)

[Horoscope](#)

[Greeting Cards](#)

Newspaper

[Contact Us](#)

[About Us](#)

[How to Advertise](#)

[Home](#)

[News](#)

[Opinion](#)

[Sports](#)

[Classifieds](#)

[E.S.&T.](#)

[The Arts](#)

[The Mix](#)

[Body & Soul](#)

[Food & Drink](#)

[Your Town](#)

[Specials](#)

'Forgotten victims' get attention

Colorado Daily Staff Report

The loss of only two pets during Hurricane Charley last year shows the nation is making progress in protecting pets and farm animals during natural disasters and other emergencies, according to a University of Colorado at Boulder sociology professor.

Many improvements have been made since approximately 1,000 healthy dogs and cats had to be euthanized after Hurricane Andrew struck Florida in 1992 because there was no space to house them, said Leslie Irvine, CU-Boulder sociology professor. More than 3 million pets and farm animals died in Hurricane Floyd in 1999.

Pets are a major problem during hurricanes and other disasters because people aren't allowed to take cats and dogs into emergency shelters and most animal shelters already are filled to capacity under normal conditions, Irvine said. An estimated 58 percent of American households have at least one pet.

"After Hurricane Andrew, pets were called the 'forgotten victims,'" she said. "Almost 100 percent of people who have pets describe them as members of their families and all members of the family need a disaster plan."

The protection of pets also means better safety for humans because the No. 1 reason people give for not evacuating their homes during an emergency is the desire not to abandon their pets, Irvine said. This situation puts both people and emergency responders at increased risk.

After Hurricane Charley hit Florida last year, Irvine visited some of the hardest hit areas to study how animal shelters planned for and handled the disaster. She examined the role of volunteers, animal identification procedures, interagency communication and how emergency workers provided assistance to people suffering anguish over separation from their pets.

Irvine will present her findings Aug. 12 at the annual meeting of the Society for the Study of Social Problems in Philadelphia. Parts of her study were funded by the National Science Foundation.

In addition to cats and dogs, shelters affected by Hurricane Charley also received rabbits and ferrets, and animal control officers relocated one bear. When shelters are confronted with an emergency overflow situation, adoptable animals are sometimes transferred to other shelters. Some animals affected by the recent Florida hurricanes were airlifted as far away as Texas and Colorado.

"Florida's Charlotte County had a good plan in effect," Irvine said. "No animal had to be euthanized due to a lack of space."

Everyone is vulnerable to some type of natural or human-caused disaster, including floods,

droughts, wildfires, earthquakes, oil spills and chemical leaks, she said. As a result, "People have got to have a plan for what to do with their pets during a disaster."

Irvine will teach a new undergraduate course on "Animals and Society" at CU-Boulder in the fall, which will examine animals' involvement with humans as companions, entertainment, food, sport and related issues.

Colorado is one of the leading states in efforts to protect animals during emergencies, Irvine said. Information about the Colorado Animal Response Team is posted at <http://www.cosart.org/>.

Information on disaster preparedness for pets, horses and livestock is available through the Humane Society of the United States at http://www.hsus.org/hsus_field/hsus_disaster_center/disaster_preparedness_brochures.html and through the American Veterinary Medical Association at http://www.avma.org/disaster/saving_family.asp.