



# When Disaster Strikes — Look to Red Star Animal Emergency Services™

*Will the world learn the lesson which demands preparedness as necessary for efficiency and emergency and to prevent great sacrifices?*

~ William O. Stillman, 1919

Dr. William O. Stillman, president of American Humane Association from 1905 to 1924, wrote those words about the need to create a major, pioneering effort to reduce the widespread suffering of animals caught in the horrors of war, abuse, and natural disasters. Over the course of the ensuing decades, that effort — established under the name American Red Star Animal Relief — would become involved in the most dramatic cases of animal rescue here at home and around the world.

## The Beginning of Red Star

During World War I, animals — primarily horses — were used extensively in battle and to transport arms and supplies. Treacherous conditions and the weapons of war inflicted heavy casualties on them. In 1914, the International Red Star Alliance was organized in Geneva, Switzerland, to bring about international cooperation on behalf of sick and wounded war animals, while securing the neutrality of those engaged in such work. Soon, the U.S. Secretary of War officially requested American Humane Association to assist the government in “rendering organized aid to injured animals” in much the same way as the American Red Cross cared for sick and wounded soldiers.



So began American Red Star Animal Relief. Dr. Stillman helped organize 125 branches of Red Star across the United States and began raising money for ambulances, veterinarians, and supplies for U.S. Army horses. An advertisement in a 1917 issue of *The National Humane Review* called for Red Star workers who were willing to “do their bit” on behalf of Army animal relief, without salary and, as far as possible, assume their own expenses. Humanitarians nationwide volunteered to support this important effort.

Before the end of 1917, Red Star had gained the support of the nation’s most popular motion picture celebrity, Mary Pickford. Known as “America’s sweetheart,” Pickford found “time and inspiration” to support the work of Red Star. The actress declared, “I am proud to be associated with this wonderful humanitarian enterprise,” bringing national attention to the efforts of Red Star to save military horses and dogs.

## A New Focus at Home

After World War I ended, Red Star focused mainly on domestic issues, such as starvation among livestock, as well as humane education, distributing materials to schoolchildren. As time went on, Red Star also began helping animal victims of disasters throughout the country. The massive Ohio River flood of 1937 spurred American Humane Association to greatly expand its animal emergency services outreach to fulfill Dr. Stillman’s vision that “Red Star be large enough to cope with any disaster,” and called for a fund large enough for that purpose.

## Red Star Today

American Humane Association continues to help animals affected by disasters and other emergencies, through what today is called Red Star Animal Emergency Services. Frequent disasters — including large-scale, unprecedented events, such as Hurricane Katrina — prove the continued need for our services, as well as the need for our expertise and financial assistance. American Humane Association remains committed to making Dr. Stillman’s vision a reality and to building our capacity to fulfill his ideal.



## Our Network of National Responders

Over the past 10 years, Red Star began building a regional plan that included creating a network of national responders — trained individuals throughout the United States who are ready to provide help at a moment's notice. These volunteer responders include animal control officers, animal welfare professionals, firefighters, and emergency medical technicians who have received special training to rescue and care for animals in a variety of disaster scenarios.

Through the efforts of our national responders, American Humane Association has worked at the scene of numerous disasters in recent years, including Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav, and Ike; earthquakes in Haiti, San Francisco, and Los Angeles; major floods in the Northwest, the Midwest, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Texas, and Louisiana; tornadoes in numerous states; wildfires; blizzards; and the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. Red Star also began to support local jurisdictions overwhelmed in large cruelty, hoarding, neglect, and puppy mill seizure cases, providing emergency sheltering and supporting the investigations. As the Red Star responder corps grew and became more highly trained, these volunteers have become the backbone of an all-hazards animal disaster response network.



## Animal Emergency Resources

Today, Red Star focuses considerable time and resources on training and equipment, including maintaining a fleet of emergency response vehicles. We created a special Red Star Emergency Fund to ensure that this work goes forward and animals' needs are met.

The flagship of our emergency fleet is the Rescue Rig, an 82-foot-long specialized tractor-trailer equipped with all the resources needed to support a team of responders and animal rescue activities. It includes a mobile veterinary surgery room, animal rescue equipment, rescue boats, animal food, cages, kennels, and other gear needed to rescue and house animals. When not responding to emergencies, the Rescue Rig serves as a touring educational center that helps inform communities how to prepare for and protect animals during disasters.

## Training Is Essential

Equipment and personnel cannot get the job done without proper training. During Hurricane Andrew in 1992, it was evident that people responding to animal needs did not have enough training to handle animals or perform technical rescues, such as water rescues. American Humane Association began providing this training, which we continuously enhance with new curricula and updates. Red Star volunteers can participate in numerous tracks of technical trainings offered several times a year throughout the country. Our Emergency Services department also delivers federally recognized trainings on disaster sheltering for companion animals and offers trainings that instruct animal workers and shelter operators how to prepare for disasters.

## Red Star Is Ready for Tomorrow's Disasters

Every year, new disasters challenge communities and families throughout the United States and around the world, such as the radiological emergency in Japan compounding the devastation of the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami. And Red Star incorporates lessons learned from each such event into our training and preparedness efforts, so we can respond effectively to future similar situations, wherever they occur.

More and more, government agencies and local officials are recognizing the need for organized and well-trained responses to disasters that involve animals. And Red Star, with our continued commitment to animal welfare, excellence in training, and historic legacy of service, will again provide this vital support and be a guiding light in dangerous times.

# American Humane Association™

The nation's voice for the protection of children & animals™

[www.americanhumane.org](http://www.americanhumane.org)

