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March 10, 1998

Ms. Patricia Abrams, Coordinator
Sarasota K-9 Search and Rescue
4730 Country Meadows Blvd.
Sarasota, FL 34235

Dear Pat,

We would like to take the opportunity to applaud the Sarasota K-9 Search and Rescue Team for taking the initiative to cross train as members of the Disaster Animal Response Team (DART). Although the team's primary mission in the recent response to the tornadoes in Osceola and Orange counties was human recovery, your performance as disaster animal responders was also exemplary.

While activated to search for human victims, your team not only rescued animal victims, but also carefully tagged and documented the location of deceased animals. This action certainly assisted pet owners in discovering the fate of their animals and having closure about their loss. In addition, pets which you observed, but were unable to rescue, were documented, providing invaluable information to allow pet owners or animal services personnel into the disaster area to retrieve the pets.

Your team's understanding that pets are an important concern for owners who have become the victim of a disaster, and your commitment to alleviating the stress of these victims by including their pets in your response efforts, was commendable.

The response by Sarasota K-9 Search and Rescue was the first test of the mutual aid guidelines between Emergency Support Function (ESF) 17 - Animal Protection and ESF 9 - Search and Rescue. Your success proved that this agreement can work. We thank you for your hard work and compassion for all the victims of that disaster.

Sincerely,

Laura Bevan, Director
Southeast Regional Office
The Humane Society of the U.S

Janice Jones, ESF 17 Liaison
Florida Division of Emergency
Management

Joe Kight, ESF-17 Liaison
Florida Department of Agriculture
and Consumer Services

Cindy Ferguson, Coordinator
Disaster Animal Response Team

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