

Risk management – Planning for a safe event

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Many AMO's are being faced with the task of organising a companion animal event. It may be a microchipping day, pets' day out, school education day, community pet show or a simple open day for a leash free area. Running an event of any description involves risks - add a couple of dogs and a few owners and these risks are substantially increased.

The management of these risks is a critical factor in the professional management of any event and being able to identify these risks is the first step towards a safer event for all concerned.

Risk management is a structured process of identifying, evaluating and controlling risks in a way that will minimise organisational losses and maximises opportunities. Key areas within event management include site assessment, equipment hire, waste management, stall holder safety, staff management, first aid for people & their animals and emergency management.

By enhancing your knowledge and skills for staging a successful and safe companion animal event, your event that attracts people and their pets will be one to remember – not to forget.

Stages of event planning

Approval for Event

Event organisers usually must gain approval from local and sometimes state authorities to hold public events. Areas to search for possible conflicts are as follows:

- Does Council require a DA? Council may require a Development Application for an event on the basis that events are a form of development.
- Will the event be in accordance with the Local Environment Plan, is the site environmentally sensitive, and is the area a nominated breeding ground for any bird species?
- Local traffic committee involvement?
- Inform local police as a possible disturbance to the area?

Venue consideration

It may be necessary to consider a number of alternative venues for the event. The following should be considered in selecting a suitable venue.

- Does Council's insurance policy cover council for the proposed area?
- What services/facilities are at the proposed event site?
- What are the costs involved to hire the site, and is it available?
- Emergency access to the venue and within the venue?
- Parking availability for staff, stall holders and spectators?
- Possible traffic congestion in the surrounding area?
- Does the venue have provisions for people with disabilities?
- Will weather conditions require any special considerations? Rain, extreme heat, high winds etc.
- Availability of power and water?

Hazards

In selecting a site, especially for an outdoor event, an analysis should be made of any potential hazards in the area. Hazards may include:

- Threatened plant and animal species in the area.
- Waterways - child safety
- Extremes of temperature – identify shaded areas – at scheduled time period of the event.
- Pest, large animals, pollens and poisonous plants
- Building structures
- Maintenance work on the area
- Traffic (exposure to)

Staff, stall holders and demonstration participants

- All stall holders are to have public liability insurance for the event and their level of cover needs to be established - \$10million or \$20 million etc – no insurance – no attendance. A certificate of currency is required to be sighted.
- Provide all stall holders with an information pack which should include the following information: set-up times and arrangements, locality map showing the location of the venue and map showing stall placement, demonstration areas, program of events, toilets and water, information tent, first aid tent, parking details for stall holders, wet weather and cancellation details, and a contact number for the event organiser.
- For demonstrations ensure there are sufficient barricades erected around the demonstration for the safety of the demonstration participants and spectators
- Delegate duties to other staff members and ensure all staff are adequately trained to carry out their designated task.
- Conduct regular briefing meetings for all attending staff and volunteers before the event to discuss logistics, possible problems that may arise and updates on the progress of the event.

Well informed stall holders, staff and demonstration participants are a key to event success – the more people that know what's going on, the fewer problems will be encountered.

Crowd movement

Aspects of managing crowd movement where there may be health and safety implications include the following:

- Public transport pressures
- Possible consideration for the use of shuttle buses to reduce private vehicle usage.
- Traffic control measures
- Public parking arrangements, overflow parking arrangements, sign posting, segregation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Will the overflow congest the surrounding roads?
- Parking control – staff required for direction
- Communication between traffic management and other services
- Signposting, including entrance and exit gates, toilets, information tent, first aid.
- Communications inside and outside the venue to provide public announcements, marshalling instructions and emergency plans.
- Effective use of barriers can avoid many problems, including congestion in thoroughfares.

Communication systems

A means of communicating with the crowd is essential at all events. It is an important element of the safety plan and the following should be considered:

- What volume is required for announcements to be heard over spectator noise?
- Will the announcements be easily understood by the audience?
- Will there be a need for multi lingual announcements?

For outside the venue or to control parking and traffic, megaphones may be used. It is also important to ensure the event organiser, attending staff and stall holders are able to communicate. This can be done effectively with two way radios. A central communication area should be designated and used as a base for all information.

Information centre

A well identified, appropriately located, well publicised information centre on-site staffed with knowledgeable staff can reduce pressures on security, health and other event staff by providing a full range of information services to spectators. The information centre can handle address the following issues:

- Provide venue maps and give general directions and locations of stalls.
- Hand out programs of events
- Act as a meeting point for groups
- Record lost and found items
- Assist lost children
- Make relevant announcements throughout the day
- First Aid Centre

Public health

Relevant health authorities must be consulted on:

- Safe and adequate water supply – the fire brigade are always happy to be there on the day to provide water for animals
- Food safety – An environmental health officer should initially access any food services proposal based on current food hygiene legislation and food safety codes
- Sanitation requirements and waste management
- Pest control
- Building safety
- Noise issues
- Ensure adequate numbers of toilets are on-site to accommodate expected crowds.
- Provide adequate receptacles for general waste. Waste wise events are encouraged – separate bins for food scraps, recyclable material, animal waste and general waste items.
- Health promotion throughout events – Sunsmart, No smoking areas – butts in the bin, Nutrition – encourage food vendors to have healthy options available.
- Also regular announcements directed towards responsible pet ownership including keeping your dog on a lead and picking up after your dog.

Medical care

Suitable medical facilities such as a first aid room, tent or vehicle should be onsite and clearly identified and easily accessible. Medical issues to consider:

- What level of on-site medical care, if any, is expected to be required given the nature of the event?
- What equipment/supplies are required for this type of event?
- What are the main types of injuries or illnesses that will be seen?

Specialist events – animals

Events involving animals, or at which animals are permitted can increase the potential risks of the events. Whilst owners and handlers say they re able to keep their animals under control, arrangement should be in place to respond to any loss of control or a possible fight that could develop. The following considerations need to be made.

- Have a veterinarian on-site to provide first-aid treatment.
- Ensure fresh, clean water is available and suitable size drinking stations and that the water receptacles are regularly cleaned and refilled.
- Adequate shade is available for people and their dogs – in extreme heat this can reduce cases of heat stress and dehydration. Be sure that the venue is checked for shade at the proposed time period for the event.
- Contact local veterinary clinics before the event and advise of event details in case of an animal emergency.

Event cancellation or postponement

From time to time events may need to be cancelled, postponed or interrupted. This has the potential to cause havoc, especially when crowds have already gathered and large numbers of people are attempting to leave the venue at the same time. Plans should be in place to appropriately manage such situations.

After the event

Planning, organising and holding the event is only part of a successful event. Ensure that a de-briefing meeting is carried out as soon as possible after the event to discuss the event including problems encountered, comments received from spectators and general suggestions for improvement. It is also beneficial to send evaluation forms to stall holders to get further input in to the event and use this information gathered to further develop future events.

Kester Nolder

After 10 ~ years in the Australian Army and 3 years as a dodgy used car salesman, Kester started in Local Government with the Hobart City Council as a Parking Officer. In 1996 Kester began working as relief Animal Management Officer with the Hobart City Council and within a few months was appointed in that role full time along with Greg Turnbull.

During his seven years with Hobart City Council, Kester, along with other Animal Management Officers from across Tasmania, formed the Animal Management Officers Association of Tasmania, and was elected the inaugural President of that Association. Kester held this office for 2 years and is currently the Secretary of the Association. He was a member of the Australian AMO Team of the Year 1998 (Hobart City Council).

In November 2003 Kester was appointed as the Senior Animal Management Officer with the Glenorchy City Council, which is still his current position. Kester was on the Local Arrangements Committee for the UAM Conference in Hobart in 2000 and again for UAM 2006.

Samantha Morris

Samantha Morris is an Accredited Canine Behavioural Trainer. She is a qualified veterinary nurse, and holds the Canine Good Citizens Cert IV from the Delta Society. She has been employed in Local Government as an Animal Management Officer since 1998, and is currently the Education Officer for Animal Management with Glenorchy City Council. She can be heard regularly on ABC talkback radio dealing with pets' problem behaviours, and also provides one-on-one behaviour consultations and Puppy and Adult dog classes through veterinary clinics and UrbanDogz Pet Training