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# Onondaga County Animal Response Team (OnCART): Development & Application

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Christopher P. Graber

## Problem

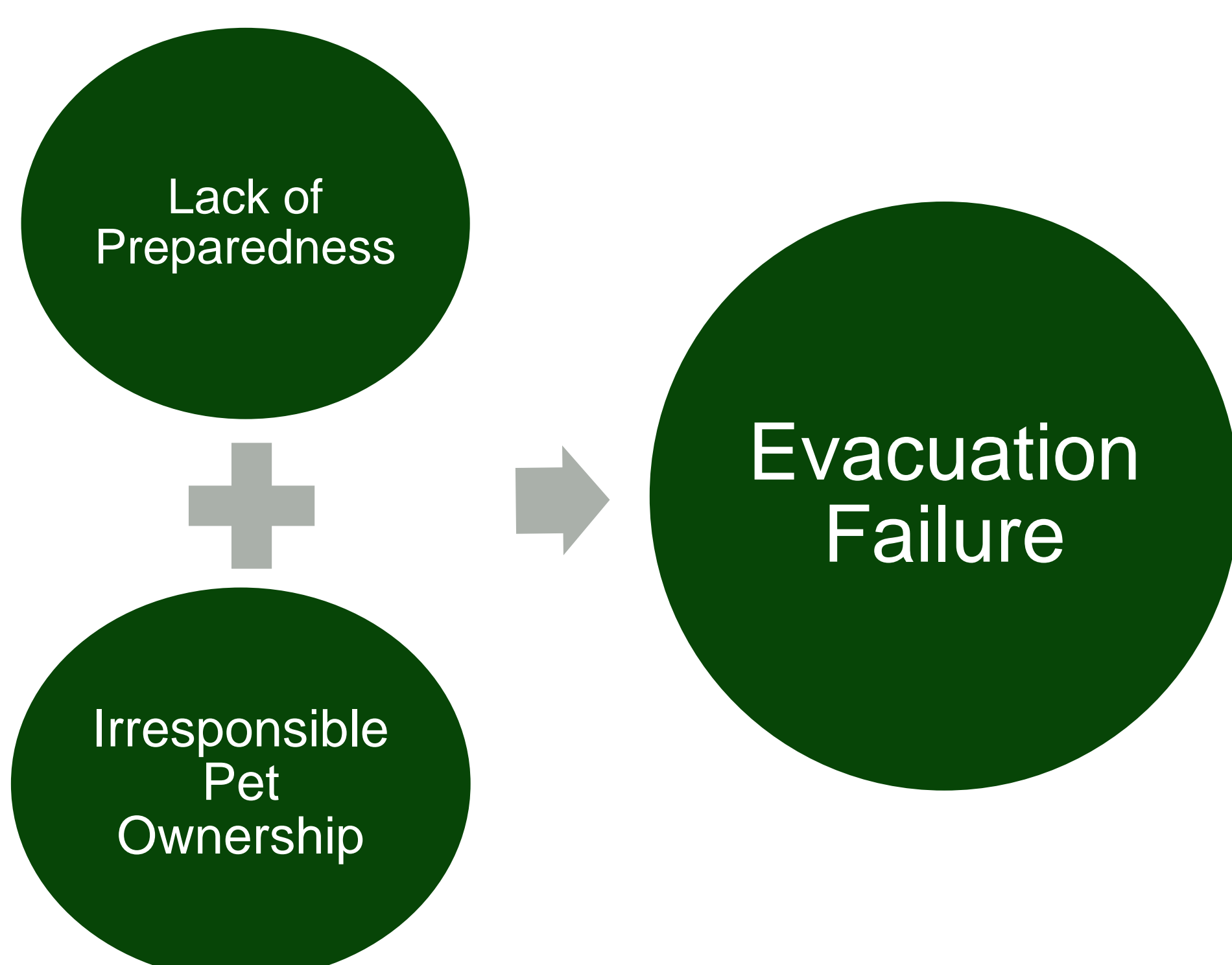
Throughout the United States there exists a severe lack of disaster planning for animal populations and their owners. This lack of planning places animals, animal owners, and first responders at increased risk and reduces community resiliency during disasters.

## Abstract

- In an effort to better address animal welfare issues, the Onondaga County Department of Emergency Management (OCDEM) initiated the development of an all-volunteer County Animal Response Team (OnCART).
- An annex to Onondaga County's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) and OnCART Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were developed in collaboration with state, county, and local stakeholders. These emergency plans define OnCART's authority, capabilities and limitations, roles and responsibilities, and command structure.
- Following a study of existing CARTs and animal disaster incidents throughout the U.S., a public education and outreach initiative was also initiated. Training modules for OnCART members, first responders and the public, as well as multimedia educational tools were developed in order to increase awareness and preparation within Onondaga County.

## Research

A combination of irresponsible pet ownership and a lack of disaster planning and preparation significantly increases the likelihood of evacuation failure during a disaster. Additionally, the loss of companion animals can deepen the emotional and financial impacts of disasters, ultimately reducing community resilience.



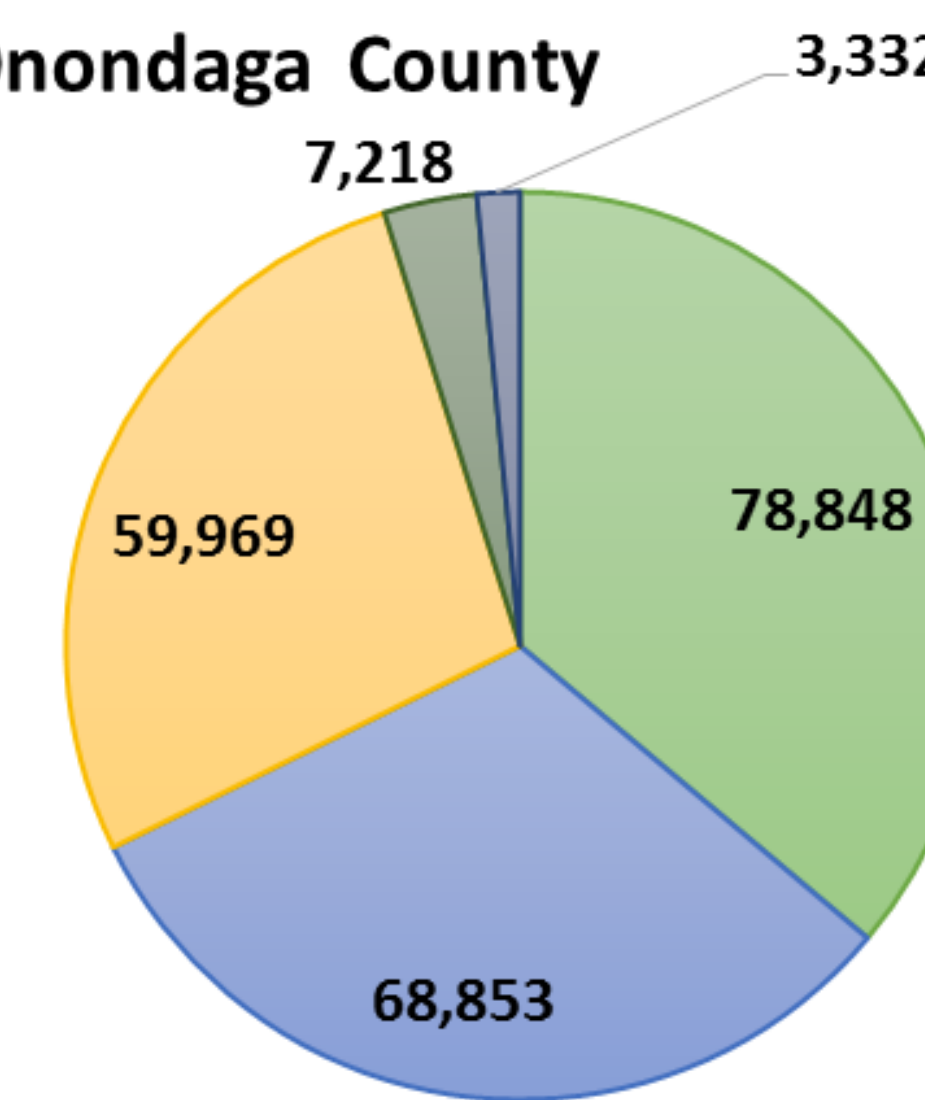
### Key Findings:

- Animal owners are **20% to 30%** more likely to fail to evacuate than non-animal owners
- Evacuation failures heighten risks to citizens, pets, and first responders and intensify the economic impact of disasters

## Summary

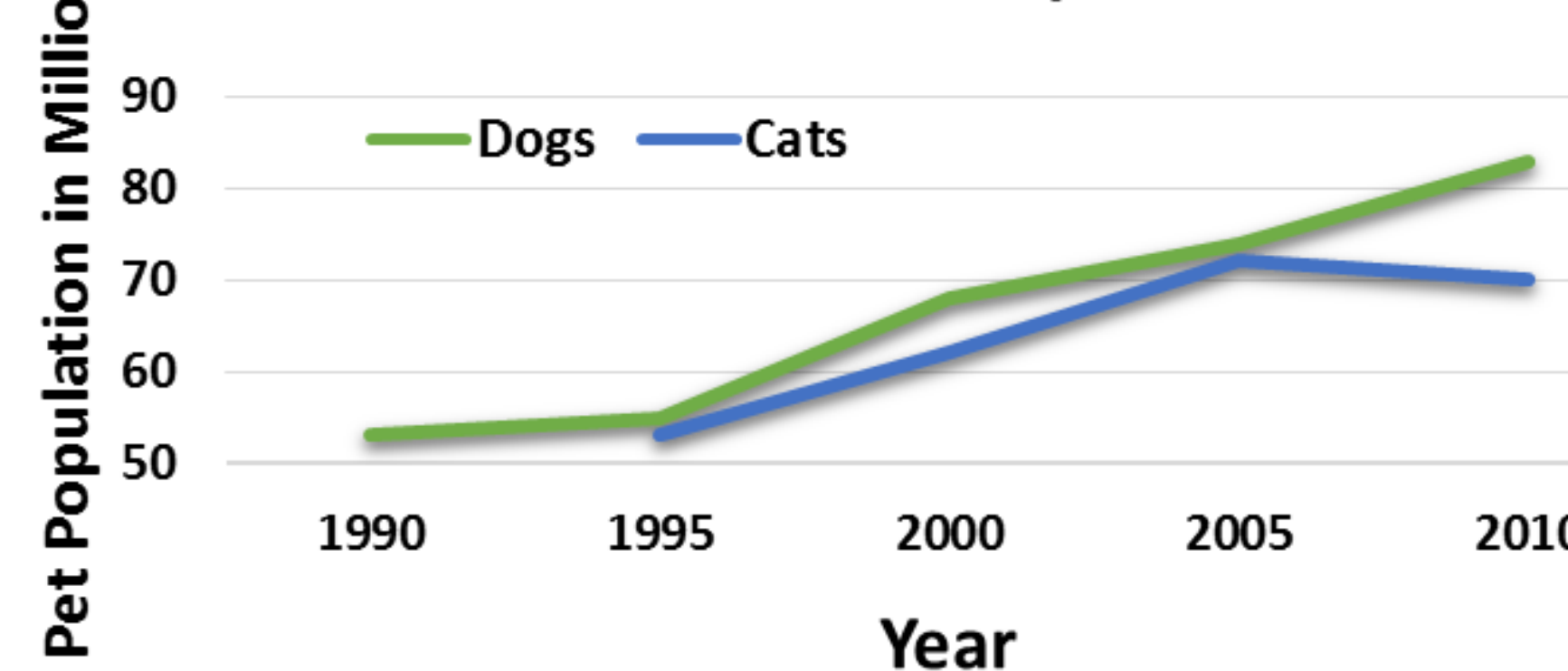
### Animal Ownership In Onondaga County

- Non Animal-Owning Households
- Dog Owning Households
- Cat Owning Households
- Bird Owning Households
- Horse Owning Households



- Animal ownership in the U.S. has increased dramatically since 1990
- 50% of animal owners identify their pets as members of the family
- In 2015, U.S. animal owners spent \$60.3 billion on their pets, a 57% increase since 2006 (\$38.5 billion)
- Only 6 counties in New York State are equipped with a functional CART

### U.S. Pet Ownership Trends



## Products

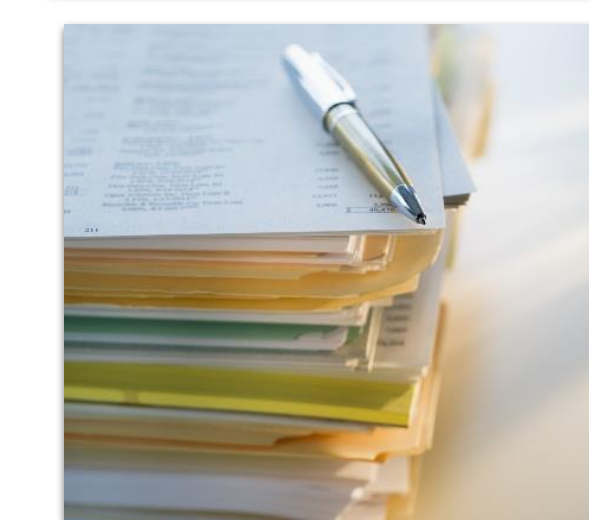
### OnCART Publications & Educational Tools:

- Annex to Onondaga County's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan
- OnCART Standard Operating Procedures
- First Responder Training Module
- OnCART Member Training Module
- Pamphlet: "Animal Owner's Guide to Disaster Preparedness"
- Leaflet: "Animal Disaster Preparation"
- OnCART Educational Web Content



## Process

### Step 1



#### Core Research:

- The Animal-Human Bond
- Animal Ownership & Evac. Rates
- Ownership statistics in Onondaga County
- Existing NYS CARTs
- Animal Rescue Best Practices

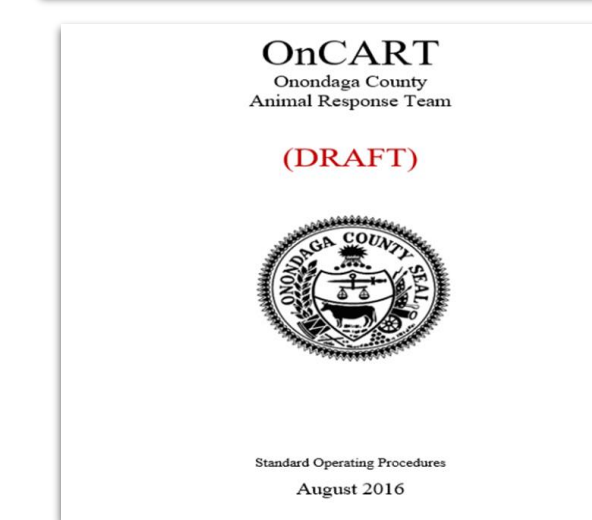
### Step 2



#### Collaboration:

- OCDEM
- Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation
- NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets
- NYS Empire State Animal Response Team

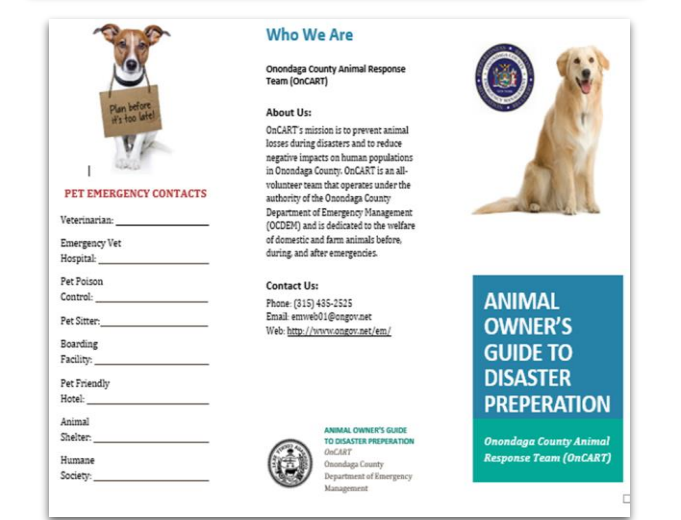
### Step 3



#### Plan Development:

- CEMP Annex to incorporate OnCART into county planning & response efforts
- SOPs to guide OnCART operations during emergency and non-emergency situations

### Step 4



#### Education & Outreach:

- Training modules to enhance capabilities and communication
- Educational tools to promote responsible pet ownership and disaster preparation

## Conclusion

- As a result of a fully operational OnCART, Onondaga County is better equipped to address the unique needs of animal populations and human owners during disasters.
- Training modules designed for OnCART members and first responders have improved Onondaga County's response capabilities as well as interagency communication.
- Public education and outreach initiatives have been utilized to reduce the prevalence of irresponsible pet ownership and to increase disaster preparedness and preparation among animal owners.

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