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Helping animals displaced by Superstorm Sandy

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The following information was submitted by Dr. Erin Henry, an intern with the Maddie's Shelter Medicine program at Cornell.



In January of 2013, I was provided the opportunity of a lifetime. It all began when Dr. Berliner received an email asking if she or anyone she knew would be able to travel to Brooklyn and work as a veterinarian at the ASPCA's temporary boarding shelter for animals displaced by Hurricane Sandy. The shelter had been in place for a couple of months, and while it was originally staffed by a National Veterinary Response Team, they weren't able to extend their time and animals still needed care. I didn't quite know what to expect, but signed up to spend a week in Brooklyn providing veterinary care for animals that remained in the shelter. Well, needless to say, 7 days turned into 11, and would have been longer if I wasn't traveling the day after my return!


From treating individual animals to managing infectious disease transmission in the population, every day brought new experiences that helped me to grow as a veterinarian. However, it wasn't just the medicine and "in the trenches" work, but my colleagues that made my experience invaluable.

I was lucky enough to have a more experienced veterinarian on-site to help with my decision-making process. She took time to do daily teaching rounds on topics from common infectious disease agents in shelters (I hope I made my program proud!) to what goes into planning, building and managing a temporary animal shelter.

Additionally, I was surrounded by other volunteers from all walks of life who traveled from all over the country to make the lives of displaced animals a little better. From a clean soft bed to daily enrichment, everything was covered. All of this hard work in exchange for the simple reward of seeing an animal being reunited with its owner, or a stray animal transferred to a rescue where they can start anew.

Thank you to the ASPCA for such an amazing opportunity!

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