A One Health approach to emergency preparedness in health and social services: Incorporating animal care into emergency social services planning

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ABSTRACT:
Northern communities are disproportionately vulnerable to climate change given the elevated exposure to Arctic environmental change and high sensitivity of social systems. Climate change effects on Yukoners’ health will include direct impacts, environmental system mediated impacts, and social mediated effects. Extreme weather events are anticipated to increase in Yukon over coming decades, potentially resulting in an increased need for emergency health and social service response. While work in Yukon on climate change adaptation is not new, actions to improve adaptive capacity in the health sector have been limited. Additionally, under the recent Joint External Evaluation for International Health Regulations, challenges were identified for Canada around sustaining response and recovery from a large-scale health disaster, and embracing the One Health triad. Yukon is no different in experiencing these challenges. Response to wildfire evacuations in Yukon during the summer of 2018 exposed vulnerabilities in current Yukon emergency social services plans related to animal care, which can act as a barrier to evacuation and place emergency response workers at risk. Yukon faces several challenges in planning for animal care during an emergency social services response, including a large and diverse animal population (such as sled dogs and pack horses), limited capacity of local veterinarians and animal shelters, paucity of data related to domestic animals in the territory, and large geographic distances between communities. This poster will provide an overview of an approach to incorporating animal care into disaster preparedness, that addresses the challenges posed by living in a remote northern jurisdiction.