

## Accreditation? Direct Impacts are in the Details!

The GFAS Accreditation process requires a significant commitment of time and resources. There are multi-page animal care and operations questionnaires to complete and numerous official documents to upload, not to mention, site visits and compliance plans. That being said, the prodigious value of GFAS accreditation is undeniable! GFAS Accreditation provides recognition to animal sanctuaries and rescues worldwide that they provide humane and responsible care. Intrinsically, improvement in best practices improves the sustainability of organizations which increases our global capacity to care for so many at-risk animals.

The metrics GFAS often uses to report our impact include: the number of certifications per year; the number of animals affected; and the states and countries involved. However, even greater clarity of the **value of accreditation** to sanctuaries and rescues, can be obtained by looking at the details!

For a six-month period in 2019, direct accreditation outcomes were tabulated for 37 groups that completed their certification (new groups, renewals, verifications and accreditations). Direct accreditation outcomes were defined as specific actions taken by organizations during the process of becoming certified to meet GFAS standards of best practices. These specific actions included improvement in animal care, better management and governance practices, policy development and increased safety measures. In total, 45 individual GFAS standards were addressed by sanctuaries and rescues during their application process.

**Table 1** shows the most frequent actions/improvements made by animal sanctuaries and rescues as a direct result of their involvement in the GFAS accreditation process.

Not surprisingly, the top three areas of impact involve improvements in **risk management**. We all agree that caring for animals-in-need requires compassion and dedication. It is a labor of love and it is very hard work. Despite good intentions, many animal welfare organizations have failed, or have reached the end of their resources placing the very animals they care about in jeopardy. Caring is essential but so is good business management, solid financial resources and ethical governance practices.

This is the **first** in a series of e-newsletter blogs which will highlight specific improvements and outcomes animal sanctuaries and rescues have made as part of their GFAS Accreditation process.

<b>Table 1: GFAS Accreditation Impacts on Organizations July-December 2019</b>		<b>N=37</b>
<b>Category/Standard</b>		<b>Percent of Groups Impacted</b>
PF-6 Security: General Safety Monitoring		35%
G-7 Strategic Planning		32
S-6 Disaster Preparedness Plans and Protocols		30
S-2 Animal Care Standard Operation Procedures		27
H-1 Housing and Fencing		24
S-9 Human First Aid		24
F-4 Insurance and Risk Management		22
F-1 Budget and Financial Reports		16
G-2 Ownership of Rescue/Sanctuary Property and Contingency Planning		16
G-3 Succession Planning		16
G-4 Board of Directors/Trustees or Equivalent		16

### **PF-6 Security: General Safety Monitoring**

Thirty-five (35%) of sanctuaries and rescues that were certified during the 6-month tabulation period made significant improvements to the fire safety of their facilities. The Animal Welfare Institute recently completed its year-end tally of animal housing and barn fires and reported that at least 469,000 farm animals have perished in potentially preventable fires in 2019. Although these numbers include large commercial enterprises as well as small family farms, there is no denying the tragic loss of life and property from preventable fires. While the cause of most fires is unknown, many are believed to be from electrical malfunctions, faulty heating devices and improper storage of combustible materials. Proper fire safety prevention, detection and suppression saves lives and suffering.

<https://awionline.org/press-releases/devastating-year-barn-fires-450000-farm-animals-killed>

All barns, stables and indoor animal housing are essentially a fire waiting to happen. Although GFAS Standard PF-6: Security: General Safety and Monitoring specifies more than just fire safety, 35% of organizations certified by GFAS made specific fire safety improvements (**Table 2**). Some changes were as simple as the addition of a fire alarm or a fire extinguisher, or the more complicated improvement to electrical wiring, but each improvement that could potentially prevent a fire or save a life, is invaluable.

**Table 2:**  
PF-6 Security: General Safety Monitoring



- Improvement to fire safety status of facility with installation of sufficient smoke alarms and fire extinguishers
- Required extra measures to be taken to protect animals from fire, flood and hazards such as removal of hay from building in which animals are housed
- Required extra measures to be taken to protect animals from fire, flood and hazards such as removal of hazardous and flammable materials
- Improved electrical, heating and cooling equipment safety of facility