

OERS-DRD now has Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue (TLAER) training

July 27, 2012

On July 5-7th OERS Disaster Response Division (DRD) team members participated in a 3 day Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue (TLAER) course offered by the world authorities in this field, Tomas and Rebecca Gimenez, who literally wrote the book on this subject. They have trained rescuers around the world and it was both an honor and a privilege for OERS-DRD to be a part of their first course in Canada. It was held at the Atlantic Veterinary College in Charlottetown PEI with 40 participants, some of whom had travelled from as far away as British Columbia and New Zealand. In addition to OERS-DRD, there was representation from fire rescue, first responders, horse handlers from racetracks, veterinarians and local veterinary students.

The course consisted of didactic sessions in the mornings that were supplemented with hands on practical fieldwork in the afternoons. The morning sessions focused on various situations that large animals find themselves trapped in and proper protocols to be followed while on scene. Then, each



afternoon, the OERS team practised skills ranging from knot tying to how to handle and use the appropriate equipment needed for each situation by utilizing mock animals. Then when the instructors felt everyone was ready, the TLAER horse 'instructors' Torque and Karma stepped in and these new skills were applied on them in real simulated scenarios. This last step was crucial to experience how a real live 'victim' would respond to the rescuers efforts and to learn

how to minimize any further stress to the animal and affect a successful rescue.

The OERS team learned basic webbing use for the forward, rear and sideways drags. These are used to extricate animals from situations where space exists for this to be done safely. Once the team had practiced on a model, they were able to apply the webbing on one of the 'instructor' horses, Torque, who patiently tolerated their inexperience until they had it down pat! Then the use of hoists was covered and for the hands on portion, the class broke into teams and assembled an 'A' frame hoist. Though complicated, it was clear that the system could be very useful for specific hoisting of large animals in areas where large cranes cannot access.



Safety issues with trailers that haul animals was brought home when a 2 horse trailer was tipped on its side and the flimsy nature of some of these trailers was identified. This was critical to appreciate as



trailer rollovers are another scenario where large animals can find themselves in need of rescue. A few of the OERS-DRD team were placed into the partially tipped trailer, which was safely secured with ropes. As it was slowly righted, those inside had a

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real feeling for what it can be like for the victims during such an event.

As part of the overall rescue process, the OERS team learned that keeping some distance between themselves and their panicked victim was always preferred. This was especially true for trailer rollovers, but equally applicable to any confined space such as trenches or pits into which animals have fallen. Tools to extend the reach of the rescuers, such as boathooks to place the webbing and ropes required for the extrication process, as well as to untangle whatever gear the animal might have become wrapped in, was emphasized and practiced.



The large animal 'rescue glide' is strong yet flexible and resembles a huge industrial grade 'crazy carpet'. The OERS team learned how to take advantage of it for rescues involving recumbent animals that need to be removed from areas not accessible by vehicle. Because of its flexibility, the glide can bend to fit through smaller openings and around various obstacles. By securing the animal on the glide and pulling the glide not the animal, the animal can be safely moved minimizing any potential injuries that could occur from a drag across rough terrain. After Karma was carefully positioned and strapped to the glide, the OERS-DRD team also participated in the pull and steering aspect and learned how to safely drag a victim on the glide through obstacles to safety. This took teamwork and co-ordination to make it a safe journey for all concerned.

Finally to demonstrate the dangers associated with barn fires, the OERS team entered a 'smoke' filled barn in an attempt to enact a rescue of trapped horses. Though this was theatre smoke, it was very impressive how disoriented everyone was and how dangerous and difficult this could be. Visibility was almost nil and the instructors pointed out that had the power been off, as is usual in such situations, this would have been worse. As well, had the smoke been real, the heat and acrid air would have created a very hazardous situation, something that fire services know all too well. The team learned, yet again, a healthy respect for the balance between safe rescue of animals in trouble versus one that puts both rescuer and victim at risk.



After a tough final exam, all the OERS-DRD participants graduated and received their certificates and patches. Now OERS-DRD has within its well trained members, 8 TLAER trained and qualified personnel. Their new found knowledge will only serve to strengthen OERS-DRD team skills that can be used to assist as needed whenever we may be called on to do so.

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OERS –DRD “Prepared & Determined”

