



## Community of Hillsborough Animal and Agricultural Response Team (CHAART)

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 10, 2008

#### Swimming into Storm Prep: Something Fishy's Going On

Hurricane Bertha, the first major Atlantic storm of the season, has thankfully spared the Tampa Bay region. But experts and emergency planners are always on guard. The Community of Hillsborough Animal & Agricultural Response Team (CHAART) meets regularly to discuss disaster preparedness for animal and agricultural-related interests in Hillsborough County.

Media is invited to the next CHAART meeting on Tuesday, July 15th at 10:00 a.m. The event will feature a tour of the University of Florida's Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory and outdoor ponds in Ruskin, Florida (1408 24th St., SE). A variety of photo opportunities and interviews will be available.

#### *Did you know?*

- Florida is home to as much as 95% of U.S. production of aquarium fish (depending on season).
- The heaviest concentration of farms is in the Tampa Bay region.
- Current production includes over 800 varieties of freshwater fish, 200 varieties of freshwater plants, plus a growing number of marine fish, invertebrates, and live rock.
- There are over 200 certified farms.
- The 2003 farm-gate value for tropical fish is \$47.2 million and \$20.4 million for aquatic plants.
- These ornamentals represent one of the largest segments of U.S. aquaculture.

Preparations for pets is a primary concern following storms like Charley and Katrina, but first-responders for domestic animals have also reached out to the agricultural and business community. The aquaculture industry is a major player in our County and State, and communication between government and the private sector is key the success of effective disaster planning. CHAART seeks to identify resources, provide training, and assist with planning efforts. The non-profit 501c3 organization supports State and local emergency operation efforts and is modeled after Florida's SART (State Agricultural Response Team).

To RSVP for the July 15th event, please call (813)612-5368 or (813)671-5230. To learn more, please log onto [www.chaart.org](http://www.chaart.org).