

# Pets in Disasters



Your pet should be part of your Family Disaster Plan. Here's a checklist of things to consider to take care of your pet in the event of a disaster, especially if you have to evacuate your home.

## Preparing Your Pet For An Evacuation

- If you will evacuate, determine where your pet will stay.
- If you will be staying with friends or relatives, make sure you may bring your pet.
- If you will stay in a hotel, confirm in advance that they will allow pets.
- Pets are not allowed at Red Cross shelters. Exceptions are service animals, such as Seeing Eye dogs.
- If you cannot take your pet with you, and if time permits, reserve space at an animal clinic or boarding kennel. Ask about any required vaccinations and additional fees, if you cannot return immediately to pick up your pet.
- The final option is one that no pet owner should have to exercise. If you evacuate (and leave your pet) and your home is even partially destroyed, you should prepare your family for the possible loss of your pet. If you are forced to leave your pet, confine it to a pet carrier in an interior closet or bathroom with an ample supply of drinking water and food. Include other familiar items such as chew toys, blankets, etc.
- Include pet food, water and your pet's other needs (i.e., medication) in your Disaster Supplies Kit.
- Consider spaying or neutering your pet.
- A portable pet carrier is a must for each pet. It should be large enough to allow the pet room to stand up and turn around.
- Make sure that all vaccinations are current for your pet(s).
- Identify your pet by current license and rabies tags and/or microchipping, tattooing, or freeze branding.
- Take clear photos of your pet(s), and store them with ownership papers and license information.
- Exotic pets, such as snakes and birds, require special containers (not glass!). If they escape, the odds of getting them back are poor.

*(Continued on page 2)*

# Pets in Disasters

(Continued from page 1)

## Shelter for Your Pet

- If you live in a hurricane evacuation zone, have a hurricane plan for your pet prior to the start of hurricane season. Contact veterinary clinics and boarding facilities in your area to reserve space for your pet. Call early, space is always limited.
- Make sure your pet is wearing a collar with an ID and a leash.
- Pet shelters cannot accept un-vaccinated animals. Proof of inoculation is required.
- Bring pet food (enough for at least three days), bottled water and all necessary medications.
- Small animals should be transported in a carrier. If you have a spacious crate, bring it.

## Preparing Livestock For An Evacuation

- Livestock should only be boarded in barns that are strong enough to withstand the worst possible weather (e.g.: concrete structures). If not leave livestock in a fenced pasture.
- Our area has a livestock, horse, and poultry population. Most stables and barns are very vulnerable to hurricane force winds. Transport of horses and poultry to other locations can be very time consuming, so leave plenty of time in your evacuation plan.
- Horse and cattle food: place hay and grain in solid, protected areas; store water in "storm-proof" tubs.
- Include antibiotic ointment, betadine scrub solution, neosporin ointment, gauze, and tape in animal First Aid Kits.
- Proper ID should be worn by livestock at all times in case they get lost or injured during a storm.
- Waterproof nametags on a collar are ideal.
- The best bet for large animals is a plastic collar, unless the animal is freeze branded.
- The universal microchip computer ID system is also available.

(Continued on page 3)



# Pets in Disasters

(Continued from page 2)

## Returning Home

- Use caution in allowing your pet outdoors after returning home. After a storm or tornado, for example, familiar scents and landmarks may be altered, leaving your pet confused and consequently lost.
- Downed power lines, broken glass and other hazards could present real dangers to your pet.
- Try to prevent your pet from consuming water or food outside your home. It may have become contaminated.
- Watch animals closely. Keep all your animals under your direct control. Pets may become disoriented, particularly if the disaster has affected scent markers that normally allow them to find their homes. Pets may be able to escape from your home or your fence may be broken. Be aware of hazards at nose and paw or hoof level, particularly debris, spilled chemicals, fertilizers, and other substances that might not seem to be dangerous to humans. In addition, the behavior of pets may change dramatically after an earthquake, becoming aggressive or defensive, so be aware of their well-being and take measures to protect them from hazards, including displaced wild animals, and to ensure the safety of other people and animals.
- If your pet is lost, you'll need to work quickly, since Animal Control may be forced to destroy some strays gathered after a devastating storm. Contact the Animal Shelter, veterinary clinics, boarding facilities, the Humane Society, Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in your area.
- If you find someone else's pet contact the entities above.

## Disaster Supplies Checklist for Pets

Prepare a pet disaster supplies kit that includes:

- Medications and medical records stored in a waterproof container and a first aid kit. A pet first aid book also is good to include.
- Sturdy leashes, harnesses, and carriers to transport pets safely and to ensure that your pets cannot escape. A carrier should be large enough for the animal to stand comfortably, turn around, and lie down. Your pet may have to stay in the carrier for hours at a time while you have taken shelter away from home. Be sure to have a secure cage with no loose objects inside it to accommodate smaller pets. These may require blankets or towels for bedding and warmth, and other special items.

(Continued on page 4)



# Pets in Disasters

(Continued from page 3)

- Current photos and descriptions of your pets to help others identify them in case you and your pets become separated and to prove that they are yours.
- Food and water for at least three days for each pet, bowls, cat litter and litter box, and a manual can opener.
- Information on feeding schedules, medical conditions, behavior problems, and the name and telephone number of your veterinarian in case you have to board your pets or place them in foster care.
- Pet toys and the pet's bed, if you can easily take it, to reduce stress.
- Other useful items include newspapers, paper towels, plastic trash bags, grooming items, and household bleach.

## First Aid Kit for Pets

A fully equipped household first aid kit contains almost all of the supplies you may need for your pets. A simple first aid kit for your pets should include these additional items in a waterproof container:

- Latex (or hypoallergenic material) gloves
- Gauze sponges ( a variety of sizes)
- Gauze roll, 2-inch width
- Material to make a splint
- Adhesive tape, hypoallergenic
- Non-adherent sterile pads
- Small scissors
- Grooming clippers or safety razor
- Nylon leash
- Towel
- Muzzle
- Compact emergency "blanket" (available in the camping department of many stores)
- Water-based sterile lubricant
- Hydrogen peroxide (3 percent)
- Rubbing alcohol
- Topical antibiotic ointment
- Epsom salts
- Baby-dose syringe or eye dropper
- Sterile eye lubricant
- Sterile saline wash
- Diphenhydramine, if approved by your veterinarian
- Glucose paste or syrup

(Continued on page 5)



# Pets in Disasters

*(Continued from page 4)*

- Styptic powder or pencil
- Plastic card (such as old credit card) to scrape away stingers
- List of emergency phone numbers including those for your pet's veterinarian, an after-hours emergency veterinary hospital, and the National Animal Poison Control Center (1-888-426-4435)
- Petroleum jelly
- Penlight
- Clean cloth
- Needle-nose pliers

For a complete list of items for your pet first aid kit and detailed information on how to provide first aid for your pets, consult *Pet First Aid* by Barbara Mammato, DVM, MPH, a handbook sponsored by the American Red Cross and The Humane Society of the United States.

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