

Disaster Preparedness

With the entire country focused on the Gulf Coast and the effects of the natural disaster there, we wanted to make sure our members' pets are as protected as they can be.

Most of us who hear or read of a disaster think, "This will never happen to me." It's best to be prepared whether disaster strikes or not. The following is a checklist for your home and car.

Please remember to always take your animals with you when there's an emergency. If disaster strikes and you cannot get to your home, use a pre-planned "buddy system" and call your neighbor to get your pet.

In case of emergency call the closest animal humane shelter serving your area. Be prepared!

HOME:

1. Keep at least one week supply of pet food in an air tight container.
2. Buy pop top cans small enough for one feeding since you may not have a way to refrigerate partially used cans. Rotate food at least once every three months.
3. Include a feeding dish; spoon, and a hand crank can opener in case you do not have pop-tops.
4. If tap water is not suitable for humans to drink, it is not safe for animals to drink so have at least a (1) one week supply at all times and store it in plastic containers and keep in a cool dark place. Rotate water once every (2) two months.
5. Have disposable pooper scooper bags for dogs.
6. For cats you'll need a small litter box, a supply of cat litter, and plastic bags for cleaning the litter box
7. Have a small container of dish soap for cleaning and a roll of paper towels
8. Have identification on your pet at all times and keep an extra collar with current ID in your disaster preparedness kit
9. Make sure your current address and phone number are on any and all of your pets' ID tags (Animals that come into shelters during a disaster with I.D. and/or microchip have a greater chance of being reunited with their owners)
10. Keep a harness for both dogs and cats in your kit. A dog can slip out of a collar but not a harness and cats can be walked should they be confined for a long period of time
11. Make sure you have a carrier or collapsible crate to transport your pet or to keep it in while you are displaced; it should be large enough for a litter box, food, and water
12. If your dog or cat is on long-term medications, always have at least a (2) two week supply since you may not be able to refill it in a disaster
13. Keep copies of each animal's medical records in your kit
14. Keep a first aid book and kit for your pet with your supplies
15. Include current photos of your pet(s) AND include pictures of YOU with your pets to show proof of ownership if necessary
16. Keep some toys handy also

CAR:

1. Keep many of the same items in your car that you do in your home however keep the smaller sizes. Include the following items in your car:

- Food
- Water
- Carrier
- Leash
- Litter
- Water dish AND food dish
- Medical records
- Medications
- Animal ID and photos

2. You should always have at both your home and in your car: cash on hand, a flashlight and a portable radio with plenty of batteries and the locations of nearest shelters

3. Because human evacuation shelters do not allow animals, locate a place where you can take your pet. Places to consider include vet clinics, boarding kennels, animal shelters, or the home of a friend. Some hotels/motels will allow small animals temporarily.

Don't wait until it's too late. You owe it to your animals to plan ahead!!!

If you are forced to evacuate your home, don't leave your pet behind. If it's not safe for you, it's not safe for your pet. Most disaster relief shelters do not admit pets, so you'll need other options. Think ahead. Find out if any motels or hotels in the region accept guests with pets. Make a list of area veterinarians and kennels that might board your pet. Get together with friends or nearby relatives to make reciprocal arrangements for temporary pet housing if your home is unlivable.

If for some reason, you absolutely must leave your dog or cat behind, bring them inside; do not leave a dog tied outside. Put a highly visible sign in the window to notify rescue crews to the presence of pets; leave plenty of water in a large open container; leave food in a dispenser-style bowl (so your pet can't eat it all at once); and do not tie or cage your dog or cat.

Make certain all your pets wear identification tags. Dogs and cats should wear collars with tags; birds can wear leg rings. Another way to identify your pet is with a tattoo or microchip. Many veterinarians, and some humane societies and animal welfare agencies, provide tattooing or microchipping services. Register your pet's number with a tattoo or microchip registration service.

Since your telephone may not work in the wake of a disaster, your pet's ID tag should include a friend or relative's phone number as well as your own. Keep a supply of write-on ID tags, in case you're evacuated. Make sure your pet is wearing a tag with its new address, however temporary.

Have several close-up photos and a record of your pet's size, weight and special markings. If your pet is lost, you can use this information to prepare posters and flyers. It will also help in identifying you as the owner if your pet is found.

Put together an emergency supply kit for your pet. Include:

1. A week's supply of food and water for each pet, stored in lightweight containers, like plastic bags and bottles. If your dog or cat eats canned food, don't forget a can opener. Bird seed spoils; replace it every six months. Water doesn't keep indefinitely either; it should be replaced every few months. Store one quart of water for each 10 pounds of body weight per pet, per day. Don't forget lightweight food bowls.
2. Copies of your pet's up-to-date vaccination certificates.
3. A fresh supply of any medications your pet needs, and copies of any prescriptions.
4. Pet first aid supplies.
5. Cat litter and a kitty pan.
6. A leash and collar for each dog.
7. A leash, harness and carrier for each cat.
8. A blanket for extra warmth and paper towels for clean-ups.
9. Some familiar toys.
10. A list of emergency telephone numbers-veterinarians, boarding kennels, shelters and humane societies.
11. A supply of cash to pay for emergency boarding.

Disaster Preparedness

Are you prepared to take care of your pets when a disaster strikes? If not, NOW is the time to stock up on the items that you will need so you will be ready. Don't put off doing what you should do now! It may just make the difference between keeping your pets alive or losing your pet when a disaster strikes.

Shopping List For Pets:

Here are the supplies that you should have on hand in a disaster kit for pets. Adjust amounts according to the number of pets you have.

FOOD

1. Stock at least an extra week's supply for disasters at all times
2. Get the brand your pet is used to, and offer it at as close to the normal time as possible. Maintaining its normal routine, as best you can, will minimize the stress it may be feeling.
3. If you use canned food, be sure to have a hand-crank can opener, or buy flip-top cans. (Buy cans small enough to be used at one feeding. You may not have a way to properly refrigerate a partially used can of food, and you should not use food that has been left out.)
4. If you use dry food, store it in an airtight, waterproof container. Also have an extra feeding dish and a spoon for scooping/mixing food.
5. Rotate food every three months.
6. If you use canned food, reduce the normal amount by half (supplement with dry food) to reduce the likelihood of your pet getting diarrhea.

WATER

1. Stock at least a week's supply for disasters at all times.
2. Store in plastic containers in a cool, dark place. Rotate it at least every two months.
3. Do not let animals drink flood water. If officials have issued a "boil water" warning, the water from your tap is not safe for you or your animals. If you are drinking bottled or purified water during a disaster, that is what your pet should be drinking.

SANITATION

Cats: Have an extra small litter box and litter scoop in your supplies, plus a week's supply of cat litter and small plastic bags for disposing of waste.

Dogs: Have a pooper scooper and plastic bags for disposing of waste. You may want to purchase some disposable pooper scooper bags at a pet supply store.

Cleaning Supplies: Have a small container of dish soap and disinfectant, plus at least 4 rolls of paper towels.

COLLARS AND IDENTIFICATION TAGS

Cats: A breakaway collar is recommended. It is designed to slip over a cat's head should it get caught on something.

Dogs: Do not keep a choke collar on your dog all the time, as it might accidentally get caught on something and cause the dog to choke itself.

1. Have a properly fitting collar and tag on your pet at all times, and have an extra collar in your supplies.
2. The collar and/or tag should include your name, home phone number, and address.
3. Also have a spare temporary tag in your supplies that you can write on, in case you will be living somewhere else temporarily. This tag should include your name and temporary address and phone number. (In addition to a collar and tag, you may also wish to consider micro chips and tattoos as permanent forms of ID.)
4. Addresses are important. Remember, the phones may not be working during a disaster and its aftermath.

CARRIER FOR CAT EVACUATION

In the event you must evacuate, have a cat carrier assembled and ready to go, with a shoe-box size litter box and food and water dishes that fit in the carrier. (An "Evacsak" is an alternative to a carrier. It is similar to a pillow case, but is a much more safe and secure way to transport a small animal. Evacsak take up a lot less room than carriers, and if you have several cats, you can get a lot more of them into a car. To purchase these, contact Animal Care Equipment and Services at 1-800-338-ACES.)

CAGE/CRATE:

CATS

1. Have a collapsible wire cage to house your cat if it needs to be evacuated and/or confined during a disaster. (Remember, exterior walls can fall down and windows can break, so you need a way to keep your cat safely confined).
2. Be sure the cage is large enough to give the cat room to spread out, with extra space for a food and water dish, plus a litter box.
3. If your cat plays with toys, include some to help keep it entertained.

DOGS

1. Have a collapsible wire crate or plastic airline crate on hand to transport your dog if you need to evacuate, and/or to house it during a disaster. (Remember, exterior walls can fall down and windows can break, so you need a way to keep your dog safely confined.)

2. Be sure the crate is large enough for your dog to lie down comfortably, with extra space for a food and water dish.
3. You may also wish to include a chew toy to help keep it entertained if it needs to be confined for a long time

HARNESS AND LEASH

Cats: Have a properly fitting harness and leash in your supplies so that if your cat must be confined in a cage for an extended period of time, you can take it out for exercise.

Dogs: Have a properly fitting harness and at least a 6-foot leash in your supplies for walking your dog. Disasters are stressful for dogs, and a frightened dog can slip out of a collar, but not a harness.

STAKE-OUT CHAIN FOR DOGS

1. Have a stake-out chain for each dog in your household. Walls and fences may come down during a disaster, and you may need to keep your dog confined on a chain until repairs can be made.
2. If you don't have something to attach the chain to, get a stake that screws into the ground. Be sure it is secure for the size dog you have. Pet supply stores sell a variety of sizes.
3. Be sure to use a chain and not a leash that the dog can chew through.
4. Be sure the chain is long enough to let the dog move around, but not so long that it might get tangled around something and cause the dog to choke itself.
5. Be sure there is shelter from the elements within the dog's reach.
6. Do not chain the dog in a place where it could fall off of something (like an elevated porch) and hang itself.

VETERINARY CARE

1. Keep your pet's vaccinations current, for protection in case it needs to be housed with other animals during a disaster. Keep a copy of its medical records, including vaccinations, with your disaster supplies.
2. Before a disaster strikes, check to see whether your veterinarian has a disaster plan. If not, find one who does. You need to know where to take your pet if it needs medical care during a disaster.
3. Knowing in advance where to take a critically injured animal may save its life.

MEDICATIONS

1. If your pet is on long-term medication, always have on hand at least a week's supply. (Your vet may not be able to fill a prescription for a while.)
2. If the medicine must be refrigerated, have an ice chest to store it in, in case your electricity goes off. You can usually get ice from a Red Cross shelter.

FIRST AID KIT

Have in your supplies a basic first aid kit. Basic items for pets include:

- First-aid book for cats
- Antiseptic wipes (1 package)
- Conforming bandage (3" x 5")
- Emollient cream (1 container)
- Absorbent gauze pads (4" x 4")
- Tweezers and scissors

- Absorbent gauze roll (3" x 1 yd.)
- Instant cold pack
- Cotton-tipped applicators (1 small box)
- Latex disposable gloves (several pairs)
- Properly fitting muzzle for dogs

PHOTOS

1. Place photos in resealable plastic bags in case you need to post them in the rain.
2. Include yourself in some photos as proof of ownership.
3. Keep all the photos with the important insurance papers that you would take with you if you had to evacuate.

COMFORTING YOUR PET

Remember to comfort your pet during a disaster. It is as frightened as you are, and having you near to give it a hug will help keep it calm. (It will probably help you too.) If your pet is not ready to be comforted, do not force it! Let it come to you when it is ready.

IF YOUR PET IS LOST DURING A DISASTER

Know where animal shelters or animal rescue organizations are located in your area. You may need to visit them to look for your dog. It is important to look for your dog as soon as you realize it is gone, as some shelters may not be able to house large numbers of displaced animals for a very long time. Take your photos.

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