

Disaster Preparedness for Companion Animals



The best way to protect your pets from the effects of a disaster is to have a plan in place. If you must evacuate your home, the most important thing you can do to protect your pets is to take them with you.

Have a safe place to take your pets

Many emergency shelters or hotels do not admit pets, so it is important to find places ahead of time that do. Search in advance for both local and out-of-area pet-friendly hotels, check out boarding facilities, or make a housing exchange agreement with an out-of-area friend or relative. "Pet-friendly accommodations" can be found on the Internet by entering the phrase into a search engine.

Microchip your pets

- Be sure that you update your microchip registration when you move, change phone numbers, get a new emergency contact or change veterinary clinics.
- Keep an ID tag on your pets' collars.

Start a buddy system

- Exchange keys and disaster plans with someone who can evacuate your animals if you are away from home when disaster strikes.
- Give your buddy your pets' medical information and your emergency contact information.

Take photos of you with your pets

- Photos can prove ownership if you are separated from your pets.
- Keep copies of the photos in your wallet and your disaster kit (see below).
- Laminate or put your photos in a protective plastic sleeve along with your pets' information.
- Give copies to a relative or friend who lives outside of your area.

Assemble a disaster kit

Following are the supplies that you should have in a disaster kit for pets.

✓ **Food:** Have a two-week supply of the food your pets normally eat. If they eat canned food, buy cans small enough for one feeding, as refrigeration may not be available for leftover food. Include a can opener, as well as a spoon and a feeding dish. Store food in airtight, waterproof containers and rotate every three months to prevent spoilage.

✓ **Water:** Have a two-week supply of water in plastic containers that have been stored in a cool, dark location. Rotate water every two months. Pack an extra water container.

✓ **Sanitation supplies:**

Dogs: Include a pooper scooper and/or disposable bags.

Cats: Include a small litter box with a two-week supply of litter, as well as a scoop and disposable bags.

Small mammals: Include fresh bedding materials.

✓ **Cleaning supplies:** Include a small container of soap for washing dishes, along with paper towels for drying.

✓ **Collars, tags and leashes**

- ✓ **Crates or collapsible wire cages:** Be sure that the crates/cages are large enough for your pets to lie down comfortably and have enough room for food, water dishes and litter boxes.
- ✓ **Medications:** If your pet is on long-term medication, always have on hand at least a two-week supply. Check with your veterinary clinic to see if it has a disaster plan. If not, find a veterinarian in your area who does have a plan to provide services during a disaster, so that you can get medical care if your pets are sick or injured.
- ✓ **First-aid kit:** Check with your veterinarian to find out what should be included in your pet first-aid kit. Some suggested items include:
 - First-aid book for dogs, cats or small mammals
 - Conforming bandages (3" x 5")
 - Absorbent gauze pads (4" x 4")
 - Absorbent gauze roll (3"x 1 yard)
 - Q-tips
 - Antiseptic wipes
 - Emollient cream
 - Tweezers and scissors
 - Instant cold pack
 - Latex disposable gloves (several pairs)
 - Properly fitted or adjustable muzzle
 - Vaccination/medical records

If you must leave your dog or cat at home during an emergency or evacuation, make sure to leave access to food and water. Mark your window with a decal or hand-made sign to alert emergency personnel that animals (and how many) are in the house, and leave current contact information.

Stay informed

Learn more about preparing for an emergency at www.makeitthrough.org.

The Pets Evacuation and Standards Act (PL 109-308), passed in October 2006, requires that State and local emergency preparedness plans address the needs of individuals with household pets and service animals. The law does not change the fact that most public shelters will not accept pets. Visit the Animal Welfare Information Center, National Agricultural Library, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, awic.nal.usda.gov for more information.

©2007 Dumb Friends League. All Rights Reserved.



Thanks to our friends at the
Dumb Friends League of Denver
for the use of these informative tips.