

## Disaster Preparedness for Pets

### Step 1: Get a Rescue Alert Sticker

This easy-to-use sticker will let people know that pets are inside your home. Make sure it is visible to rescue workers, and that it includes 1) the types and number of pets in your household AND YOUR CELL PHONE NUMBER; 2) the name of your veterinarian; and 3) your veterinarian's phone number. If you must evacuate with your pets, and if time allows, write "EVACUATED" across the stickers and leave a number where you will be, if you know that.

Your local pet supply store may also sell similar stickers.



### Step 2: Arrange a Safe Haven

Arrange a safe haven for you and your pets in the event of a disaster or evacuation. **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR PETS BEHIND.** Remember, if it isn't safe for you, it isn't safe for your pets. They may become trapped or escape and be exposed to numerous life-threatening hazards. **Note that not all Red Cross disaster shelters accept pets**, so it is imperative that you have determined where you will bring your pets ahead of time:

- Create a list of boarding kennels and pet facilities in the area where you will go.
- Ask the humane society or animal shelter in that area if they have an emergency shelter or foster care for pets.
- Identify hotels or motels along your evacuation area that accept pets.
- Ask friends and relatives outside your immediate area if they would be willing to take in you and your pet or find a boarding facility near where you will be staying.
- If you have a place to go, put that contact number on a separate In Case of Emergency tag on your pet along with pet's name. Send your pet's medical history to your friend or family member and remember to update it as things change.

### Step 3: Emergency Supplies and Traveling Kits

Keep a disaster pack and supplies ready to grab and go. Make sure that everyone in the family knows where it is. This kit should be clearly labeled and easy to carry. Items to consider keeping in or near your pack include:

- Pet first-aid kit with first aid guide;

- 7 days' worth of canned (pop-top or include manual can opener) and dry food (be sure to rotate with regular food so it's fresh);
- Disposable litter trays (aluminum roasting pans are perfect) and your brand of litter;
- Pee pads, newspaper or paper toweling;
- Liquid dish soap and disinfectant;
- Disposable garbage bags and pooper scooper bags for clean-up;
- Pet feeding and water dishes;
- Extra collar or harness as well as an extra leash;
- Photocopies of medical records and a waterproof container with a two-week supply of any medicine your pet requires (Remember to rotate meds out of your emergency kit—otherwise they may go bad);
- Bottled water, at least 7 days' worth for each person and pet (store in a cool, dry place and replace every two months)
- A traveling bag, crate or sturdy carrier, ideally one for each pet
- Flashlight
- Blanket (for scooping up a fearful pet)
- Recent photos of your pets (in case you are separated and need to make "Lost" posters)
- Especially for cats: Pillowcase or EvackSack, toys, scoopable litter
- Especially for dogs: Extra leash, toys and chew toys, a week's worth of cage liner.

You should also have an emergency kit for the human members of the family. Items to include: Batteries, duct tape, flashlight, radio, multi-tool, tarp, rope, permanent marker, spray paint, baby wipes, protective clothing and footwear, extra cash, rescue whistle, important phone numbers, extra medication and copies of medical and insurance information.

#### Step 4: Choose "Designated Caregivers"

This step will take considerable time and thought. When choosing a temporary caregiver, consider someone who lives close to your residence. He or she should be someone who is generally home during the day while you are at work or has easy access to your home. A set of keys should be given to this trusted individual. This may work well with neighbors who have pets of their own—you may even swap responsibilities, depending upon who has accessibility.

When selecting a permanent caregiver, you'll need to consider other criteria. This is a person to whom you are entrusting the care of your pet in the event that something should happen to you. When selecting this "foster parent," consider people who have met your pet and have successfully cared for animals in the past. Be sure to discuss your expectations at length with a permanent caregiver, so he or she understands the responsibility of caring for your pet.

#### Step 5: Evacuation Preparation

If you must evacuate your home in a crisis, plan for the worst-case scenario. If you think you may be gone for only a day, assume that you may not be allowed to return for several weeks. When recommendations for evacuation have been announced, follow

the instructions of local and state officials. To minimize evacuation time, take these simple steps:

- Store an emergency kit, leashes and crates as close to an exit as possible.
- Make sure all pets wear collars and tags with up-to-date identification. Your pet's ID tag should contain his name, your telephone number and your emergency contact number, and any urgent medical needs. Be sure to write your pet's name, your name and contact information on your pet's carrier too.
- The ASPCA recommends microchipping your pet as a more permanent form of identification. A microchip is implanted in the animal's shoulder area, and can be read by scanner at most animal shelters.
- Always bring pets indoors at the first sign or warning of a storm or disaster. Pets can become disoriented and wander away from home during a crisis. Consider your evacuation route and call ahead to make arrangements for boarding your pet outside of the danger zone at the first sign of disaster.

#### Step 6: Geographic and Climatic Considerations

If you live in an area that is prone to certain natural catastrophes, such as tornadoes, earthquakes or floods, you should plan accordingly.

- Determine well in advance which rooms offer safe havens. These rooms should be clear of hazards such as windows, flying debris, etc.
- Choose easy-to-clean areas such as utility rooms, bathrooms, and basements as safe zones.
- Access to a supply of fresh water is particularly important. In areas that may lose electricity, fill up bathtubs and sinks ahead of time to ensure that you have access to water during a power outage or other crises.
- In the event of flooding, go to the highest location in your home, or a room that has access to counters or high shelves where your animals can take shelter.

If emergency officials recommend that you stay in your home, it's crucial that you keep your pets with you. Keep your Evac-Pack and supplies close at hand. Your pets may become stressed during the in-house confinement, so you may consider crating them for safety and comfort.

#### Special Considerations for Birds

- Birds should be transported in a secure travel cage or carrier.
- In cold weather, make certain you have a blanket over your pet's cage. This may also help reduce the stress of traveling.
- In warm weather, carry a spray bottle to periodically moisten your bird's feathers.
- Have recent photos available, and keep your bird's leg bands on for identification.
- If the carrier does not have a perch, line it with paper towels that you can change frequently.
- Keep the carrier in as quiet an area as possible.
- It is particularly imperative that birds eat on a daily basis, so purchase a timed feeder. If you need to leave your bird unexpectedly, the feeder will ensure his daily feeding schedule.

- Items to keep on hand: Catch net, heavy towel, blanket or sheet to cover cage, cage liner.

#### Special Considerations for Reptiles

- A snake may be transported in a pillowcase, but you should have permanent and secure housing for him when you reach a safe place.
- Take a sturdy bowl that is large for your pet to soak in. It's also a good idea to bring along a heating pad or other warming device, such as a hot water bottle.
- Lizards can be transported like birds (see above).

#### Special Considerations for Small Animals

- Small animals, such as hamsters, gerbils, mice and guinea pigs, should be transported in secure carriers with bedding materials, food and food bowls.
- Items to keep on hand: Salt lick, extra water bottle, small hidebox or tube, a week's worth of bedding.