



# Disaster readiness · response · recovery

## Caring for Your Pets in an Emergency

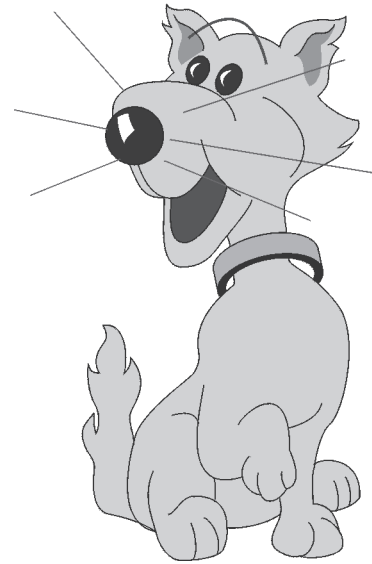
Making arrangements for your pets should be part of your household disaster planning. If you must evacuate your home, it's always wise to take your pets with you. Although trained service dogs are allowed in emergency shelters, other pets are not allowed due to public health and safety reasons. You need to have other plans for your pets. Advance planning is essential; it could save a pet's life.

### Is Your Pet Prepared for an Emergency?

If your pets will be traveling, make sure you have a pet carrier (portable kennel) or crate for each pet. Be sure the carrier is large enough; your pet should be able to stand up and turn around in it. Take time to familiarize your pet with the portable kennel. Initially confine your pet for short periods; then lengthen the time.

Be sure your pet's vaccinations are up to date. This is especially important for pets that will be boarded. Most boarding facilities require proof of current rabies and distemper vaccinations.

Be sure your cat or dog wears a properly fitted collar with a current license (identification) and rabies tag



at all times. Take a leash with you when you travel.

Keep an ample supply of pet food and other essentials, like kitty litter, with other hurricane supplies. Don't forget about newspaper, plastic bags, cleaner and disinfectant to properly handle pet wastes.

Plan ahead. Make some phone calls to determine options for pet placement and care if you have to evacuate. Consider all the possibilities:

- **Your Home** – It may be necessary for your pet to remain at home if you have to leave. Survey your home and determine the best location away from windows to place the pet during a storm emergency, such as a utility room,

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bathroom, kitchen, or other tiled areas which can be cleaned easily.

- Kennels – Survey boarding kennels to determine which will take pets during an emergency. Find out who stays on the premises with the animals in the event of a storm and what provisions would be made if the kennel should have to evacuate from a hurricane or a flood.
- Veterinarians – Check with veterinary clinics to locate those with boarding facilities.
- Friends – Ask dependable friends or relatives who live farther inland, away from the coast or river areas, for shelter during the storm emergency.
- Motels – Call motels to determine if they allow pets. Be sure to check on restrictions on the size and number of pets allowed.

### **If Your Pet Stays at Home...**

If the pet must be left behind when the home is evacuated during the storm, remember:

- Prepare an area for the pet to use inside the house away from the windows, such as a utility room, garage, bathroom, or other

tiled area which can be easily cleaned

- Bring the pet indoors well ahead of the storm.
- Do not leave any pet outside or tied up during a hurricane.
- Leave only dry-type foods that are relatively unpalatable to prevent overeating. Use sturdy food containers.
- Do not leave any treat-type vitamins or minerals supplements. Your pet may get salt poisoning if it overeats the treats.
- Birds must eat daily to survive. Use special food dispensers if you must leave them behind.
- Water for pets should be left in a bathtub or other sturdy containers that will not spill.
- If animals are on special diets and medications, consult a veterinarian.
- Never leave a cat with a dog, even if the two are normally friendly.
- Confine and keep small pets (birds, hamsters, etc.) away from cats and dogs.
- Provide access to high places, such as countertops, in case flooding occurs.
- Difficult or dangerous animals should be left in special crates or cages to reduce the possibility of escape.

### **If Your Pet Goes with You...**

If the pet will be taken along during evacuation, prepare the following items:

- License or identification and rabies tags
- Steel or fiberglass crate, properly pet-sized
- Non-spill water and food bowls
- Newspaper and/or paper towels, litter, scooper, plastic bags for waste
- Leashes and collar
- Water in sanitized non-breakable containers
- Dried and packaged semi-moist foods
- Special medications
- Toys, blankets, and special comfort items

### **After Your Pet Returns Home...**

Be careful in allowing a pet outdoors after the storm has passed. Familiar scents and landmarks may be altered, and a pet could easily be confused and become lost. Downed power lines can present a real danger to a pet.



Adapted by Dr., Wilma S. Hammett, Extension Home Environment Specialist,  
from *Guidelines for Emergency Pet Care*, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, 1997