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Are You Ready Series: The Prepared Pet

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Category: Are You Ready

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Pets should not be overlooked when acquiring short and long term emergency supplies. Our furry and feathered friends make their ways into our hearts and become loyal parts of the family. Their well being is important and they will appreciate the supplies.

Plan for Pet Disaster Needs

- Identifying shelter. For public health reasons, many emergency shelters cannot accept pets. Find out which motels and hotels in the area you plan to evacuate to allow pets — well in advance of needing them. There are also a number of guides that list hotels/motels that permit pets and could serve as a starting point. Include your local animal shelter's number in your list of emergency numbers — they might be able to provide information concerning pets during a disaster.
- Take pet food, bottled water, medications, veterinary records, cat litter/pan, can opener, food dishes, first aid kit and other supplies with you in case they're not available later. While the sun is still shining, consider packing a "pet survival" kit which could be easily deployed if disaster hits.
- Make sure identification tags are up to date and securely fastened to your pet's collar. If possible, attach the address and/or phone number of your evacuation site. If your pet gets lost, his tag is his ticket home. Make sure you have a current photo of your pet for identification purposes.
- Make sure you have a secure pet carrier, leash or harness for your pet so that if he panics, he can't escape.
- [Animals in Emergencies for Owners](#) ^[1] This video, developed by the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP) /FEMA, is intended to help pet and livestock owners prepare to protect their animals during emergencies.

Prepare to Shelter Your Pet

- Call your local emergency management office, animal shelter, or animal control office to get advice and information.
- If you are unable to return to your home right away, you may need to board your pet. Find out where pet boarding facilities are located. Be sure to research some outside your local area in case local facilities close.
- Most boarding kennels, veterinarians and animal shelters will need your pet's medical records to make sure all vaccinations are current. Include copies in your "pet survival" kit along with a photo of your pet.
- NOTE: Some animal shelters will provide temporary foster care for owned pets in times of disaster, but this should be considered only as a last resort.
- If you have no alternative but to leave your pet at home, there are some precautions you must take, but remember that leaving your pet at home alone can place your animal in great danger! Confine your pet to a safe area inside — NEVER leave your pet chained outside! Leave them loose inside your home with food and plenty of water. Remove the toilet tank lid, raise the seat and brace the bathroom door open so they can drink. Place a notice outside in a visible area, advising what pets are in the house and where they are located. Provide a phone number where you or a contact can be reached as well as the name and number of your vet.

During a Disaster

- Bring your pets inside immediately.
- Have newspapers on hand for sanitary purposes. Feed the animals moist or canned food so they will need less water to drink.
- Animals have instincts about severe weather changes and will often isolate themselves if they are afraid. Bringing them inside early can stop them from running away. Never leave a pet outside or tied up during a storm.
- Separate dogs and cats. Even if your dogs and cats normally get along, the anxiety of an emergency situation can cause pets to act irrationally. Keep small pets away from cats and dogs.
- In an emergency, you may have to take your birds with you. Talk with your veterinarian or local pet store about special food dispensers that regulate the amount of food a bird is given. Make sure that the bird is caged and the cage is covered by a thin cloth or sheet to provide security and filtered light.

After a Disaster

- If after a disaster you have to leave town, take your pets with you. Pets are unlikely to survive on their own.
- After a disaster, some pets become separated from their owners, having emergency information or [emergency identification cards](#) ^[2] on each pet could help you find your pet faster.
- In the first few days after the disaster, leash your pets when they go outside. Always maintain close contact. Familiar scents and landmarks may be altered and your pet may become confused and lost. Also, snakes and other dangerous animals may be brought into the area with flood areas. Downed power lines are a hazard.
- The behavior of your pets may change after an emergency. Normally quiet and friendly pets may become aggressive or defensive. Watch animals closely. Leash dogs and place them in a fenced yard with access to shelter and water.

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[1] Animals in Emergencies for Owners:

http://emc.ornl.gov/CSEPPweb/animals/animals_emergencies_owner.htm

[2] emergency identification cards: <http://www.2ndchance4pets.org/idcards.pdf>

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