

Health Risks Associated with Displaced Pets

The IDOA recently announced guidelines for taking in displaced animals.

October 28, 2005The Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) recently announced guidelines for individuals, animal rescue organizations, humane societies and shelters taking in animals displaced by Hurricane Katrina to follow, contain or prevent the spread of disease. IDOA is creating an information database of all individuals and organizations bringing these displaced animals into Illinois as well.

"The tragedy caused by Hurricane Katrina has been followed by an outpouring of compassion from Illinois residents," says Chuck Hartke, the agriculture director. "While it is commendable of individuals to open their homes to displaced animals, it is important to remember the health status of these animals is unknown and the proper steps need to be taken immediately upon the animals arriving in Illinois, so that the individuals as well as other animals, are not put at risk."

The Illinois Department of Agriculture is asking that the following measures occur to ensure displaced animals are free of disease and receive proper care. Animals need to be examined by a licensed veterinarian immediately upon arrival. Animals should be quarantined until examined by a veterinarian and treated according to the veterinarians recommendations. Animals are required to either have proof of current rabies vaccination or be revaccinated. Other recommended vaccinations include distemper, Parvo and kennel cough. Animals also should be checked and treated for external parasites, such as fleas and ticks, as well as tested for heartworm and intestinal parasites.

IDOA reminds individuals and organizations to consider that many animals may be separated from owners who are searching for them. Therefore, it encourages shelters to work with national databases to reunite these animals with their owners prior to permanent adoption. Organizations will be asked to report the name of the shelter or organization, the location of the facility, the number of animals along with the species evacuated, the date they were brought in and the source of the animals.

The department is asking any pet rescue or shelter to record and report the number of displaced animals they have taken in, by calling (217) 782-4944 or (217) 782-6657.