

Florida Hurricane Shelters to Allow Pets

For the first time, four Jacksonville locations will allow animals to stay in shelters during the upcoming hurricane season.

This hurricane season, pet owners in Duvall County, Fla., may have a little less to worry about when the next big storm hits.

The city of Jacksonville plans to open at least four pet-friendly animal shelters in time for this hurricane season, which starts June 1. At least one of the shelters is slated to serve disabled people and others with special needs.

The city has not yet identified the pet-friendly shelters, and is still working out details, such as which types of pets will be allowed. But the city has already said owners would be responsible for providing food, water and medicine for the pets, while shelters may require that pets be kept in kennels or wear muzzles and leashes.

Allowing pets to stay in hurricane shelters helps alleviate the frustration for people who previously had to make the difficult choice between staying with their pets or evacuating to a hurricane shelter.

Two other Florida counties, Broward and Miami-Dade, already have hurricane shelters that allow pets, and the Florida state Legislature is currently considering two proposals to make it mandatory for every county to have at least one animal-friendly shelter.

The House bill would limit pets at hurricane shelters to cats and dogs, while the Senate bill only excludes reptiles. Both would require owners to bring food, water, medical records and other pet supplies. Posted: April 17, 2006, 5:00 a.m. EST