

Disaster Plans for Pets Urged

Tips on how to prepare for hurricane season given.

Disaster recovery officials with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) urge pet owners and caretakers to have a disaster plan prepared for the current hurricane season.

Before disaster strikes, FEMA urges people to contact their local animal shelter, a veterinarian or emergency management office for information on caring for pets in an emergency.

Other recommendations include:

Find out if there will be any shelters available to take pets in an emergency. Ask your veterinarian if they will accept your pet in an emergency. Also, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) can provide answers to pet owners.

Decide on safe locations in your house where you could leave your pet in an emergency. You will need a portable pet home that allows your pet to rest, stand up and turn around inside. Put familiar items, such as the pets normal bedding and favorite toys inside, and label the outside with the pets name.

Assemble a portable pet disaster supply kit. Keep items in an accessible place and store them in sturdy waterproof containers that can be carried easily. Kits should include: medications (heartworm, flea prevention, rabies/vaccination), registration records, microchip/tattoo information, sturdy leashes or harnesses, and/or carriers big enough for your pet to stand up and turn around, current photos of pets, food and drinkable water for three days, bowls and manual can opener, information on feeding schedule, medical conditions, behavior problems and name and number of a veterinarian in case you have to foster or board animals.

If your pet is on medication or a special diet, find out from your veterinarian what you should do in case you have to leave it alone for several days. Try and get an extra supply of medications.

Make sure your pet has a properly fitted collar and includes current license and rabies tags. The collar should include an ID tag that has your name and also the name of a relative in another state, with address and phone number. If your dog normally wears a chain link collar, have a leather or nylon collar available if you have to leave him or her alone for several days.

Contact motels and hotels in communities outside of your area and find out if they will accept pets in an emergency if you evacuate with your pets. Some will require a nonrefundable deposit plus a charge for daily accommodations. However, in most states, trained guide dogs for the blind, hearing impaired or handicapped will be allowed to stay in emergency shelters with their owners. Posted: July 5, 2006, 5:00 a.m. EST