

Organizations Urge US to Allow Pet Evacuations

Humane Society, PETA plead for U.S. citizens leaving Lebanon to be able to bring their animals.

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) have contacted U.S. officials to plead for a change in policy barring Americans evacuating war-torn Lebanon from bringing pets with them.

The U.S. government began evacuating many of the estimated 25,000 Americans in Lebanon out of the country Wednesday, July 19 because of escalating violence in the region.

The U.S. government and several other countries, including Canada and the United Kingdom, however, are not allowing pets of any kind to board the ships transporting its citizens out of the country.

Refusing to allow pets and service animals onboard aircraft and boats leaving Lebanon will likely hamper the effort to safely evacuate American citizens. As we've seen in several natural disasters, a significant number of people refuse to leave their animals behind, HSUS president and CEO Wayne Pacelle said.

PETA has sent a letter about the policy to the head of the evacuation operation, Marine Corps Brigadier Gen. Carl Jensen. It reads in part:

Our office has been flooded with calls on behalf of desperate Americans in Lebanon who are being forbidden by American officials from taking along their dogs, cats and other animal companions often all they have left in their lives when evacuating.

So far, the U.S. military has evacuated over 4,000 Americans from Lebanon, but has stuck to its no animals policy and refused to comment on it.

Posted: July 22, 2006, 5 a.m. EST