

## Disaster Preparedness Tips

**As part of Junes Disaster Preparedness Month for Pets, animal care experts offer tips on how to be ready when a calamity calls.**

June marks the beginning of hurricane season, but its also the start of Disaster Preparedness Month for Pets, a time when animal owners are urged to plan for a potential natural or man-made catastrophe.

You can do a number of things to prepare your pets and people for an emergency or disaster. Among the suggestions from the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) are:

First, set up an appointment to talk with your veterinarian about planning for your animals during disasters.

Develop a disaster plan. If you have more than one animal, determine who's going to be in charge of each one. If you have a bird, make sure you have a travel cage. Have an idea of who's going to do what. It'll certainly make things go faster, suggests Holly Nash, DVM MS, the editor of PetEducation.com.

Put together an animal evacuation and first aid kits.

Check all pet carriers or transport cages to make sure they're in good condition, have no sharp edges and have the following information indelibly printed on them: your name; phone number; address; a description of your pet; the name of your pet; microchip ID or tattoo ID, if any; pet insurance policy number; and the address and phone number where you or a contact person can be reached if you are not at home.

Have ID tags for your animals. Identification should provide your name, home address, a phone number where you can be reached and an out-of-area phone number of someone with whom you will be in contact during or soon after the disaster/evacuation. If possible, include your veterinarians name, location and phone number.

Make photocopies of important veterinary documents to store in your animals evacuation kit, including vaccination records, medical history, important test results, medical conditions and medications.

Assemble proof of ownership information. Make copies of registration information, adoption papers, proofs of purchase and microchip/tattoo or other identification information to store in the evacuation kit. List each of your animals and their species/breed, age, sex, color and other distinguishing characteristics. Keep current photographs of your animals in the evacuation kit for identification purposes. Include yourself in some of the photos to help you reclaim your lost animals.

Identify alternate sources of food and water. If your power goes out, make sure theres somewhere, like a store across town, that you can get water from. If your local store is out of water, make sure theres somewhere else you can go, Nash said.

Make a list of motels in your area that will accept pets. Find out if motels with no pet policies will waive them in an emergency. Keep this in your animal evacuation kit.

Check with relatives and friends not in your immediate area to determine if they will take your pets in the event of an emergency.

Make a list of boarding facilities, veterinary clinics, animal shelters or other establishments that would accept pets in an emergency.

Prearrange an evacuation site(s) and emergency shelter arrangements for your family and your animals. Remember that Red Cross shelters don't allow animals.

Keep emergency cash on hand. How much? It varies. It would depend on how many people are in the household, she said. You probably want enough to spend one or two nights in a motel, have a couple of meals and buy some gas, Nash said.

And if the need arises to take shelter in your own home during a disaster, the Humane Society of the United States offers

these tips:

Bring your pets indoors as soon as local authorities say there is an imminent problem. Keep pets under your direct control so that if you have to evacuate, you won't have to spend time trying to find them.

If you have a room you can designate as a safe room, put your emergency supplies there in advance, including your pet's crate and supplies. Basements or inside rooms are preferred, depending on the type of emergency.

Have plenty of plastic bags and newspapers as well as containers and cleaning supplies to help deal with pet waste. Puppy training pads are also useful for this purpose.

Listen to the radio and don't come out of your shelter until you know its safe.