

## California Includes Pets in Disaster Plans

**Governor Schwarzenegger signs the Disaster Planning for Animals bill, requiring disaster planners to consider animals' needs.**

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Sept. 29 marked an important day for household pets, service animals and livestock. California Governor Schwarzenegger signed Assembly Bill 450, the Disaster Planning for Animals bill, and created a law that will protect both animals and their families in disaster events.

The bill, sponsored by Assembly Member Leland Yee (D-12), requires the Office of Emergency Services to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the California Department of Agriculture to incorporate the Animal Response Emergency System program into the organization's emergency planning. The Humane Society of the United States worked with the California Department of Food and Agriculture to develop the animal response system, and applauded the new legislation.

"Pets are a part of our families, and can't be left behind in an emergency," said Eric Sakach, director of the HSUS West Coast regional office. "With his signature, Governor Schwarzenegger ensures that emergency plans will keep people and pets together in the time of crisis."

In the months since Hurricane Katrina, nine states (California, Florida, Hawaii, Louisiana, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico and Vermont) have passed legislation that considers the needs of pets in disaster planning. The federal Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards (PETS) Act, recently passed in Congress. Other pet-friendly legislation in consideration includes the New York City Transit Authority's revision on its pet policies to allow animals to ride the subway or city buses during an evacuation, and the Illinois H.B. 4804 Disaster Planning for Animals has passed the House and S.B. 2836 Disaster Planning for Animals is pending in the Senate.