

Keeping Your Pet Safe in Case of a Disaster

Preparedness before the Disaster

Do Not Wait Until It Is Too Late

Countless times people have been told to leave their homes for a “short time,” only to find that they cannot return for days or weeks. Even disasters like gas leaks and minor flooding can keep you from tending to your animals for extended periods of time. To prevent situations such as these take your animals with you.

It is best to be overly cautious during a disaster warning. Preparing ahead of time and acting quickly is the best way to keep you and your family, including your animals, out of danger.

Familiarize yourself with each type of disaster that could affect your area, not forgetting a hazardous materials spill.

Be prepared for the possible disruption of services for extended periods of time, including electric, phone, and local food and water sources.

Having a plan in place and practicing the plan prior to a disaster will help you accomplish a successful evacuation and maintain the safety of your animals.

Preparing a Disaster Plan

- Set up an appointment to talk to your veterinarian about disaster planning.
- Assemble an animal evacuation kit.
- Develop an evacuation plan for all of your animals and practice the plan.
- If you live in an apartment, make sure your animals are on record with management and are able to evacuate via the stairwell. Dogs should be taught to go up and down stairs to better assist rescue personnel.
- Keep written directions to your home near your telephone. This will help you and others explain to emergency responders exactly how to get to your home.
- Identify alternate sources of food and water.
- Have well maintained backup generators for use in food-animal production operations.
- Keep all vehicles well maintained and full of gas.
- Keep emergency cash on hand.

- If you have horses or livestock, good barn and field maintenance can reduce danger. Decide on the safest housing location if evacuation is impossible, realizing that the situation is still life threatening. Assess the stability and safety of barns and other structures, promptly remove dead trees, and minimize debris in the fields and immediate environment.

In Case You Are Not At Home

- Preplace stickers on front and back house doors, barn doors, and pasture entrances to notify neighbors, fire fighters, police, and other rescue personnel that animals are on your property and where to find your evacuation supplies.
- Provide a list near your evacuation supplies of the number, type, and location of your animals, noting favorite hiding spots, in order to save precious rescue time.
- To facilitate a successful rescue, provide muzzles, handling gloves, catch nets, and animal restraints where rescue personnel can find them. Keep in mind that animals may become unpredictable when frightened.
- Designate a willing neighbor to tend to your animals in the event that a disaster occurs when you are not at home. This person should have a key to your home, be familiar with your animals, know your evacuation procedures, and know where your evacuation supplies are kept.
- In your evacuation kit, keep a pre-signed letter that releases your neighbor from responsibility if one of your animals becomes injured during the evacuation.
- You may also want to have a pre-signed veterinary medical treatment authorization with your Evacuation kit this will aid your veterinarian if your animal must be treated during your absence.

Identification

Having identification on your animals, including rabies and license tags, if applicable, may help reunite you with your animal(s) in the event that you are separated. Identification should provide your name, home address, a phone number where you can be reached, and an out-of-state phone number of someone with whom you will be in contact during or soon after the disaster/evacuation. If possible, include your veterinarian's name, location, and phone number. Examples of some forms of identification are:

Small Animal

- collar tag (a piece of tape applied to the back of the collar tag can provide evacuation site information use waterproof ink)
- microchip
- tattoo
- temporary neckband
- waterproof pouch attached to collar with identification information inside
- many reptiles may be marked with a permanent felt-tipped marker
- clear identification on cage/housing for confined animals

Equine

- microchip
- tattoo
- halter tag
- neck collars
- leg band
- brand
- mane clip

- luggage tag braided into tail or mane
- clipper-shaved information in the animals' hair
- livestock marking crayon, non-toxic, non-water-soluble spray paint, or non-water-soluble markers to write on the animals' side
- permanent marker to mark hooves

Livestock

- neck chain
- ear notches
- leg band
- ear tag
- brand
- livestock marking crayon, non-toxic, non-water-soluble spray paint, or markers to write on the animals' side
- wattle notching
- ear tattoo
- back or tail tag

Transportation/Housing

It is important to separate animals from different households as much as possible and to maintain the best possible hygiene to decrease disease transmission.

Small Animal

Leash, collar, and/or harness for each pet.

Collapsible cage or airline approved carrier should also be available for each pet, and bedded properly, for transportation and housing purposes – owning enough carriers to accommodate your pets facilitates a speedy evacuation and may mean the difference between the life or death of your pet.

Familiarize your animals with evacuation procedures and cages/carriers. Take the cage/carrier out several times a year and put dog or cat treats inside with blankets and toys. By doing this, you hope to reinforce positive feelings associated with the animal carrier.

Cat carriers should be large enough to hold a small litter pan and two small dishes and still allow your cat enough room to lie down comfortably or stand to use the litter pan.

Dog kennels or collapsible cages should be large enough to hold two no-spill bowls and still allow enough room for your dog to stand and turn around.

For added assurance, clearly label each carrier with your identification and contact information.

Locate and prearrange an evacuation site for your family and animals outside your immediate area. Ideally, this will be a friend/relative or a pet-friendly hotel that is willing to let your family and animals stay in the event of a disaster. Other possible animal housing options include veterinary hospitals, boarding kennels, and animal shelters.

Equine/Livestock

Equine/livestock evacuation can be challenging

Develop an evacuation plan and make sure that animals are familiar with being loaded onto a trailer.

Premises with facilities that are specifically designed to load and handle livestock will be much more successful in evacuating and relocating livestock.

Locate and prearrange an evacuation site for your animals outside your immediate area.

Possible sites include:

- veterinary or land grant colleges
- racetracks
- show grounds
- pastures
- stables
- fairgrounds
- equestrian centers
- livestock corrals
- stockyards or auction facilities
- other boarding facilities

If you do not have enough trailers to transport all of your animals to an evacuation site quickly, contact neighbors, local haulers, farmers, producers, or other transportation providers to establish a network of available and reliable resources that will provide transportation in the event of a disaster.

Veterinary Records

Make photocopies of important veterinary documents to store in the evacuation kit. These include:

- Vaccination records Vaccination type and date
- Rabies certificate, if applicable
- Medical history
- Important test results, such as Feline Leukemia/Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FeLV/FIV), heartworm, equine infectious anemia (Coggins test), tuberculosis, and brucellosis
- Medical conditions and medications (including drug name, dosage, and frequency of dosing)
- If your animal has a microchip, a record of the microchip number
- For cattle: if an individual animal is or has been medically treated and is still under a withdrawal period, a treatment record must be maintained. The record must include animal's ID or group ID, date of treatment/s, the drug used and the drug manufacturer's serial or lot number, dosage of drug administered, route and location of administration, and the person administering the drug. The earliest date the animal could clear the withdrawal period for the administered drug should also be listed.

Proof of Ownership

Make copies of registration information, adoption papers, proof of purchase, and microchip information to store in the evacuation kit. List each one of your animals and their species, breed, age, sex, color, and 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 animal(s). Consider preparing waterproof "Lost Pet" signs with

your animal's photo attached, your name, and your contact information to use in case your animal is lost. If your pet has a microchip, call the company to register your pet's information and make sure to keep that information updated.

List of Important Emergency Contacts

Prepare this list now before a disaster strikes. Include addresses and 24-hour contact numbers, if available. These contacts can be used by rescue personnel responding to a disaster affecting your animals or by you during a disaster or an evacuation. Keep one copy near your telephone and one copy in your animal evacuation kit.

- Numbers where you may be reached (pager, cell phone, work phone)
- Your prearranged evacuation site
- Local contact person in case of emergency when you are not available
- Out-of-state contact person
- Your veterinarian's name, clinic name, and phone numbers
- Alternate veterinarian (30-90 miles away, provides boarding)
- Boarding facility (local)
- Boarding facility (30-90 miles away)
- Hotels that allow pets (90 mile radius)
- Local Animal Control
- Local Fire Department
- Local Public Health Department
- Local animal shelter
- Local Red Cross chapter
- Local humane society
- Local Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA)
- List of internet "lost and found" animal sites

Additional contacts for equine/livestock owners:

- State veterinarian
- State veterinary colleges or land grant colleges of agriculture
- Private stables/farms
- County Extension office; this is especially important for livestock owners
- Brand inspector, if applicable
- Applicable state and county livestock associations
- Racetracks
- Fairgrounds
- Show grounds
- Stockyards
- Equestrian centers
- Local haulers or neighbors to help with transportation
- Feed distributor
- American Association of Equine Practitioners (http://aaep.org/emergency_prep.htm)
- American Association of Bovine Practitioners (<http://www.aabp.org/>)
- American Association of Small Ruminant Practitioners (<http://www.aasrp.org/>)
- American Association of Swine Veterinarians (<http://www.aasp.org/>)
- USDA-APHIS Veterinarian-in-Charge (<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/nvap/vsoffice.html>)
- USDA-APHIS Area Emergency Coordinator

Evacuation Essentials

The following lists will help you prepare for your animal(s) in the event of a disaster. The evacuation kit should be assembled in easy-to-carry, waterproof containers. It should be stored in an easily accessible location away from areas with temperature extremes. Replace the food, water, and medications as often as needed to maintain their quality and freshness and in accordance with the expiration dates. Indicate, if applicable, medications that are stored elsewhere due to temperature requirements such as refrigeration.

Consult your veterinarian for advice on making an animal evacuation kit and first aid kit that is appropriate for your individual animals. It is important that you become familiar with the items in your kit and their uses. Your veterinarian may recommend an animal first aid book to include in your kit. Consult your veterinarian regarding emergency first aid procedures and administration of any medications.

Small Animal Evacuation Kit

- 2-week supply of food (dry & canned)
- 2-week supply of water in plastic gallon jugs with secure lids
- Batteries (flashlight, radio)
- Cage/carrier (one for each animal, labeled with your contact information)
- Can opener (manual)
- Cat/wildlife gloves
- Copies of veterinary records and proof of ownership
- Emergency contact list
- Familiar items to make pets feel comfortable (favorite toys, treats, blankets)
- First aid kit (see next page)
- Flashlight
- Instructions
- Diet: record the diet for each individual animal, including what not to feed in case of allergies.
- Medications: list each animal separately, including dose and frequency for each medication. Provide veterinary and pharmacy contact information for refills.
- Leash and collar or harness (for each animal)
- Litter, litter pan, litter scoop
- Maps of local area and alternate evacuation routes (in case of road closures)
- Muzzles (dog or cat)
- Newspaper (bedding, litter)
- No-spill food and water dishes
- Paper towels
- Radio (solar and battery operated)
- Spoon (for canned food)
- Stakes and tie-outs
- Trash bags

Small Animal First Aid Kit

Consult your veterinarian when developing the first aid kit. The items below serve only as examples of what may be included in a small animal first aid kit.

- Activated charcoal (liquid)
- Anti-diarrheal liquid or tablets
- Antibiotic ointment (for wounds)
- Antibiotic eye ointment

- Bandage scissors
- Bandage tape
- Betadine® (povidone-iodine) or Nolvasan® (chlorhexidine), scrub and solution
- Cotton bandage rolls
- Cotton-tipped swabs
- Elastic bandage rolls
- Eye rinse (sterile)
- Flea and tick prevention and treatment
- Gauze pads and rolls
- Ice cream sticks (which may be used as splints)
- Isopropyl alcohol/alcohol prep pads
- Latex gloves or non-allergenic gloves
- Liquid dish detergent (mild wound and body cleanser)
- Measuring spoons
- Medications and preventatives (such as heartworm prevention), minimum 2-week supply, with clearly labeled instructions. Provide veterinary and pharmacy contact information for refills.
- Non-adherent bandage pads
- Saline solution (for rinsing wounds)
- Sterile lubricant (water based)
- Styptic powder (clotting agent)
- Syringe or eyedropper
- Thermometer (digital)
- Tourniquet
- Towel and washcloth
- Tweezers

Livestock Evacuation Kit

- 7-10 day supply of feed and water
- Batteries (flashlight, radio)
- Copies of veterinary records and proof of ownership
- Cotton halter
- Duct tape
- Emergency contact list
- Flashlight
- Heavy gloves (leather)
- Instructions
- Diet: record the diet for your animals.
- Medications: record the dose and frequency for each medication. Provide veterinary and pharmacy contact information for refills.
- Knife (sharp, all-purpose)
- Maps of local area and alternate evacuation routes (in case of road closures)
- Nose leads
- Plastic trash cans with lids (can be used to store water)
- Portable livestock panels
- Radio (solar and battery operated)
- Rope or lariat
- Shovel
- Water buckets
- Whip, prods
- Wire cutters

Equine Evacuation Kit

- 7-10 day supply of feed, supplements, and water
- Bandannas (to use as blindfolds)
- Batteries (flashlight, radio)
- Blankets
- Copies of veterinary records and proof of ownership
- Duct tape
- Emergency contact list
- First aid kit
- Flashlight
- Fly spray
- Grooming brushes
- Heavy gloves (leather)
- Hoof knife
- Hoof nippers
- Hoof pick
- Hoof rasp
- Instructions
- Diet: record the diet for your animals.
- Medications: record the dose and frequency for each medication. Provide veterinary and pharmacy contact information for refills.
- Knife (sharp, all-purpose)
- Leg wraps and leg quilts
- Maps of local area and alternate evacuation routes (in case of road closures)
- Non-nylon halters and leads (leather/cotton)
- Paper towels
- Plastic trash cans with lids (can be used to store water)
- Radio (solar and battery operated)
- Rope or lariat
- Shovel
- Tarpaulins
- Trash bags
- Twitch
- Water buckets
- Wire cutters

Equine First Aid Kit

Consult your veterinarian when developing the first aid kit. The items below serve only as examples of what may be included in an equine first aid kit.

- Antibiotic ointment (for wounds)
- Antibiotic eye ointment
- Bandage scissors
- Bandage tape
- Betadine® (povidone-iodine) or Nolvasan® (chlorhexidine), scrub and solution
- Cotton bandage rolls
- Cotton-tipped swabs
- Elastic bandage rolls
- Eye rinse (sterile)

- Gauze pads and rolls
- Isopropyl alcohol/alcohol prep pads
- Latex gloves or non-allergenic gloves
- Medications (minimum 2 week supply, with clearly labeled instructions)
- Non-adherent bandage pads
- Saline solution (for rinsing wounds)
- Sterile lubricant (water-based)
- Thermometer (digital)
- Tincture of green soap
- Tourniquet
- Towel and washcloth
- Tweezers

Evacuating Other Types of Pets

Identification, medical records, and proof of ownership are equally as important for other kinds of pets as for the aforementioned animals. Transportation of these species may require additional attention and care in order to decrease chances of stress-induced illness and death. It is important to keep pets from different sources as separate as possible and maintain the best possible hygiene in order to decrease disease transmission.

Birds

Transportation of pet birds is best accomplished using small, secure, covered carriers to avoid injury. If traveling in cold weather, always warm the interior of your vehicle before moving your bird(s) from the house to the vehicle.

Transfer your bird(s) to a standard cage upon arrival at the evacuation site; covering the cage may reduce stress; this transfer should occur in a small, enclosed room to reduce the risk of escape.

Birds should be kept in quiet areas and not allowed out of the cage in unfamiliar surroundings. Fresh food and water should be provided daily.

If your bird appears ill, be sure to lower the cage perch, food dish, and water bowl and consult a veterinarian as soon as possible.

In addition to the pertinent items listed under small animal evacuation kit, include:

- Necessary dietary supplements
- Plant mister for cooling birds in hot weather
- Hot water bottle for warming birds in cold weather
- Materials to line the bottom of the cage
- Cage perch
- Toys

Reptiles

Transportation of small reptiles can be accomplished using a pillowcase, cloth sack, or small transport carrier. If possible, promote defecation before transporting the animal (for example allow tortoises, lizards, or snakes to soak in a shallow water bath before bagging or caging).

Transfer your pet to a secure cage at the evacuation site as soon as possible and if appropriate. In addition to the pertinent items listed under small animal evacuation kit, include:

- Essential dietary supplements
- Water bowl for soaking
- Spray bottle for misting
- Extra bags or newspapers
- Heating pad
- Battery-operated heating source or other appropriate heat source
- Extra batteries
- Appropriate handling gloves/supplies
- Since most reptiles do not eat daily, feeding during evacuation circumstances may increase stress. Determine if feeding is in the animal's best interest, especially if the container may become fouled.
- Housing at the evacuation facility should be consistent with that required by the reptile. The enclosure should, if possible, be placed in a controlled environment, away from areas of heavy traffic, loud noises, and vibrations.
- Make sure that the container housing the reptile is escape proof. Nonetheless, plan for escapes.

Amphibians

Transportation of amphibians can be accomplished by using watertight plastic bags, such as the ones used for pet fish transport, or plastic containers, such as plastic shoeboxes or plastic food containers with snap-on lids.

It is best to place only one species or if possible only one animal per container.

Small ventilation holes should be placed in the upper wall or plastic lid. Smooth the inner surface of the holes with a file or sandpaper to prevent injury to the animal.

For terrestrial or semi aquatic amphibians use a tiny amount of water, or moistened paper towels, clean foam rubber, or moss as a suitable substrate.

For aquatic species, fill the plastic bag one third full of water, then inflate the bag with fresh air and close with a knot or rubber band. It is best to use clean water from the animal's enclosure to minimize physiologic stress.

Care must be taken to monitor water and air temperature, humidity, lighting, and nutrition during the time that the animal will be in the evacuation facility.

Housing at the evacuation facility should be consistent with that required by the amphibian.

The enclosure should, if possible, be placed in a controlled environment, away from areas of heavy traffic, loud noises, and vibrations.

Make sure that the container housing the amphibian is escape proof. Nonetheless, plan for escapes.

Take an extra container of water, clean moist paper towels or clean moss as is appropriate in case any of your pet's containers break or leak.

Feeding during evacuation circumstances may increase stress so it may not be in the animal's best interests to supply food, especially if the water may become fouled.

Other Small Animals

Transportation of most small mammals (ferrets, hamsters, gerbils, rats, mice, guinea pigs, etc.) is best accomplished using a secure, covered carrier or cage to reduce stress.

In addition to the pertinent items listed under small animal evacuation kit, include:

- Necessary dietary supplements
- Extra bedding materials
- Appropriate exercise equipment

An Evacuation Order Has Been Issued...Now What Do You Do?

Evacuate your family, including your animals, as early as possible. By leaving early, you will decrease the chance of becoming victims of the disaster.

- Bring your dogs, cats, and other small animals indoors.
- Make sure all animals have some form of identification securely fastened to them (or their cage, in the case of smaller, caged pets). The utilization of permanent identification is encouraged.
- Place all small pets, including cats and small dogs, inside individual transportable carriers. When stressed, animals that normally get along may become aggressive towards each other.
- Secure leashes on all large dogs.
- Load your larger animal cages/carriers into your vehicle. These will serve as temporary housing for your animals if needed.
- Load the animal evacuation kit and supplies into your vehicle.
- Call your prearranged animal evacuation site to confirm availability of space.
- Implement your equine/livestock evacuation plan.
- If evacuation of horses/livestock is impossible, relocate them to the safest place possible based on the type of imminent disaster and your environment, realizing that the situation could be life threatening.
- Make sure that they have access to hay or an appropriate and safe free-choice food source, clean water, and the safest living area possible including high ground above flood levels.
- Do not rely on automatic watering systems, because power may be lost.
- The decision to leave your horses/livestock in the field or in the barn should be based on the risks of injury resulting from the disaster as well as from the horse's/livestock's immediate environment during that disaster.
- Factors to consider include the stability of the barn, the risk of flooding, and the amount of trees and debris in the fields.
- If time permits, secure or remove all outdoor objects that may turn into dangerous flying debris.

Information provided by AVMA, http://www.avma.org/disaster/saving_family.asp

https://www.mspca.org/pet_resources/keeping-your-pet-safe-in-case-of-a-disaster/

Information downloaded from MSPCA; March 28, 2016.