

Pet Care in a Survival Situation

By David Hardin



While you are preparing your home and family for disaster, do not forget to make preparations for your pets.

The behavior of your pet may change during an emergency situation. Pets may become confused, scared or aggressive during crisis situations. Staying calm will help keep your pet calm.

Before a Disaster Strikes

Make sure your pet's vaccinations are current.

Get a copy of your pet's medical records

Take photos of each animal, include any distinguishing marks. Store the photos along with medical records in resealable plastic bags along with other important papers.

Keep a properly fitted collar, current license, and rabies and identification tags on each pet, even cats that never go outside.

Birds should be leg-banded.

Determine, in advance, the best place to leave your pet in case of a disaster. Identify a place in your home to leave your pet as well as an off-site location in case of evacuation.

Have an emergency 72-hour kit for each pet.

Familiarize your pet with the kit's carrier or cage before an emergency.

Have the following items in your pet's 72-hour kit. Items may vary depending on the pet's needs:

- 3-day supply of pet food, treats, and water
- Appropriate food and water dishes
- Can opener and disposable utensils
- Blankets or towels
- Pet hygiene items (brush, shampoo)
- Pet carriers) with ID tag (Include emergency contact numbers)
- Collar/ID/leash
- Sanitation items: litter box, litter, pooper-scooper
- Toys

A Pet first aid kit, containing the following:

- Three-day supply of any medications or vitamins your pet normally takes
- Pet first aid manual
- Names, addresses, telephone numbers of local vet offices, including 24-hour clinics
- Tape
- Scissors
- Antibacterial soap
- Cotton balls/gauze
- Hydrogen Peroxide

If possible, evacuate your pet before the disaster. Remember, survival shelters are not allowed to take pets and disaster assistance personnel are not equipped to rescue animals.

After a Disaster

Monitor your pet's behavior closely. Keep your pets on a leash and maintain close contact with them. Familiar scents and landmarks may be altered, causing confusion and abnormal behavior.

If your pet was lost, contact boarding kennels, humane shelters and veterinary hospitals.

Place signs or pet emergency stickers on your door, to notify emergency crews that you have pets that need to be found or that are inside your house and need to be rescued. These stickers and signs are available at many pet stores or for FREE from the ASPCA. Include an address and phone number on them of a close relative or friend that is not from your area. The best defense against lost animals is to have them wear a collar with identification tag.