



Preparing the Family Pet for an Emergency

Getting your family prepared for emergencies should be your first preparedness concern, but what about the family pet? Once you are sure that your family is prepared for any disaster that may occur in your area, turn to the task of preparing your family pet to survive a disaster. Believe or not, preparing your pet is similar to preparing your child.

As with children, the behavior of your family pet may change dramatically after a disaster or during an emergency situation. Pets can become confused and scared or aggressive and defensive because their lives have been turned upside down. Staying calm will help your pets and children stay calm. Don't panic and speak firmly but calmly.

Before a Disaster Strikes

1. Keep your pet's vaccinations current.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Determine 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.
5. Have an emergency 72 hour kit for each pet. Familiarize your pet with the kit's carrier or cage before an emergency. You may want to have the following items in your pet's 72-hour kit (items may vary depending on the pets 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 carrier(s) with ID tag (Include emergency contact numbers)
 - Collar/ID/leash
 - Sanitation items: litter box, litter, pooper scooper
 - Toys
 - Pet first aid kit (see contents below)

This will take care of your pet for the first 72 hours, but you can see, just as with your own family preparations, how much more comfortable your pet will be with the extras that they are used to. In a 72 hour kit, two week, or one year supply, store the dry and canned foods your pet is accustomed to eating. Just as with your own human family, familiar foods are less likely to cause digestive problems and can give your pets a feeling of security in time of stress.



A first aid kit for your pet should contain the following items:

- 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

During a Disaster

1. Evacuate your pet early, if possible, to a preselected site outside of the emergency area, possibly a relative's home or even a pet friendly hotel. Take your pet's vaccination and medical records as well as identification photographs with you.
2. In case of an evacuation, bring your pet indoors. Disaster assistance groups such as the American Red Cross and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are not equipped to handle, rescue or care for displaced pets during large-scale emergencies. Emergency and human disaster shelters cannot accept animals (except service animals), for safety and sanitation reasons. Do not leave pets chained outdoors.
3. When you must leave your pet behind, prepare an emergency pen for pets in your home that includes at least a three-day supply of dry food and a large, spill proof container of water. If possible, open a faucet to let water drip into a large container or partially fill a bathtub. Do not leave vitamin treats out for your pet, they could be fatal, if overeaten. Position cages off the floor, away from windows, and on a sturdy surface to prevent tipping over. Preselecting a site in your home will make emergency preparations for you pet easier than waiting until the emergency occurs.
4. Keep cats and dogs separate, even if they normally get along (stress in emergencies can upset the balance of friendship). Keep bird cages covered with a protective sheet, away from windows and other pets.
5. If you cannot locate your animals and have to evacuate, leave as much water and food, inside or outside, for them as possible. (It is a good idea to have an automatic feeder and water container on hand that will last for several days or more).

Making sure your family is prepared should be the number one priority in a disaster situation. It is also your responsibility to make sure your pets are prepared and well taken care of. Imagine having hungry, anxious animals running loose to compound the problems of an emergency. Love your family and your pets!