

Preparedness Before Disaster

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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

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