

## **General Disaster Preparedness for your Family Pet**

Emergencies come in many forms and they may require anything from a brief absence from your home to permanent evacuation. Each type of disaster requires different measures to keep your pets safe. The best thing you can do for your pets is to be prepared.

### **Get a Rescue Alert Sticker**

This easy to use sticker will let people know that pets are inside your home. Make sure that it is visible to rescue workers and that it includes the following:

- The types and number of pets in your home
- The name of your current veterinarian
- Your current veterinarian's phone number.

If you must evacuate and are able to take your pets with you, remember to write "EVACUATED" across the sticker. Pet alert stickers are available from the ASPCA website, your local Fire Department and at Pasco County Animal Services.

### **Arrange a Safe Haven**

Make arrangements for your pets in the event of an evacuation. **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR PETS BEHIND.**

Remember, if it isn't safe for you, it isn't safe for your pets. They may become trapped or could escape and be exposed to numerous life-threatening hazards. **NOT ALL RED CROSS DISASTER SHELTERS ACCEPT PETS,** so it's imperative that you have determined where you will bring your pets ahead of time.

- Contact your veterinarian for a list of preferred boarding kennels and facilities.
- Check with your local Animal Services to see if they provide emergency shelter or foster care for pets. (Pasco County Animal Services DOES provide limited emergency sheltering at their facility as well as at one other county run emergency evacuation shelter.)
- Identify hotels/motels outside of your immediate area that accepts pets.
- Ask friends or relatives outside of your immediate area if they would be willing to shelter your pet during an emergency situation.

### **Emergency Supplies and Traveling Kits**

Keep an Evac-Pack and supplies handy for your pets. Make sure that everyone in the family knows where it is and that it is clearly labeled and easy to carry. Contents should include:

- A pet first-aid kit and guide book (ask your vet what to include or visit the ASPCA Store to buy one online)
- 5-7 days' worth of canned (pop-top) or dry food (be sure to rotate every two months)
- Disposable litter trays (aluminum roasting pans are perfect)
- Litter or paper toweling
- Liquid dish soap and disinfectant
- Disposable garbage bags for clean-up
- Pet feeding dishes
- Extra collars, harnesses and leashes
- Photocopies of medical records and a waterproof container with a two week supply of any medications that your pet(s) require. (Always check expiration dates)
- A traveling bag, crate or sturdy carrier. (One for each pet is ideal)
- Flashlight
- Blanket (For scooping up a fearful pet.)
- Recent photos of your pet (In the event that you are separated and need to make "Lost" posters)
- For cats- a pillowcase or Eversack, toys and scoop-able litter
- For dogs- a long leash and yard stake, toys and chew toys and a week's worth of cage liner.

### **Designated Caregivers**

This could take considerable time and thought. When choosing a temporary caregiver, consider someone who lives close to your residence. They should be someone who is generally home during the time you are at work or that has easy access to your home. A set of keys should be provided to the trusted individual.

When electing a permanent caregiver, you'll need to consider other criteria. This is a person to whom you are entrusting the care of your pet in the event that something should happen to you. When selecting this "foster parent", consider people who have met your pet and have successfully cared for animals in the past. Be sure to discuss your expectations at length with a permanent caregiver, so they understand the responsibility of caring for your pet.

### **Evacuation Preparation**

If you must evacuate your home in a crisis, plan for the worst-case scenario. If you think you may be gone for only a day, assume that you may not be allowed to return for several weeks. When recommendations for evacuation have been announced, follow the instructions of local and state officials. To minimize evacuation time, follow these simple steps:

- Store an emergency kit and leashes as close to an exit as possible.
- Make sure all pets wear collars and tags with up to date identification. (All dogs in Pasco County are REQUIRED to have a current county license on them at all times)
- Microchipping your pet is a permanent form of identification. Make sure that your information is current with the microchip company.
- Always bring your pets indoors at the first sign or warning of a storm or disaster. Pets can become disoriented and wander away from home during a crisis.
- Consider your evacuation route and call ahead to make arrangements for boarding your pet outside of the danger zone at the first sign of disaster.
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### **Geographical and Climatic Considerations**

If you live in an area that is prone to natural catastrophes, such as tornadoes, earthquakes, hurricanes or flood, you should plan accordingly.

- Determine well in advance which rooms in your home are safe havens. They should be clear of hazards such as windows, items that could become flying debris, etc.
- Choose easy to clean areas like utility rooms or bathrooms as a safe zone.
- Choosing a safe room that has access to fresh water is especially important. In situations where there may be a loss of electricity, fill up bathtubs and sinks ahead of time to ensure that you have access to water.
- In the event of flooding, go to the highest location in your home or a room that has access to counters or high shelves where you and your animals can take shelter.

If emergency officials recommend that you stay in your home, it's crucial that you keep your pets with you. Keep your Evac-Pack and supplies close at hand. Keep in mind that your pets may become stressed during the in-house confinement so you may want to consider crating them for safety and comfort.

### **Special Considerations for Birds**

- Birds should be transported in a secure travel cage/carrier.
- In cold weather, make sure you have a blanket over their cage. This could also help reduce the stress of traveling.
- In warm weather, carry a spray bottle to periodically moisten your bird's feathers.
- Have recent photos available and keep your bird's leg bands on for identification.
- If your carrier does not have a perch, line it with paper towels that can be easily changed.
- Keep the carrier in as quiet an area as possible.
- It is particularly imperative that birds eat on a daily basis, so purchase a timed feeder. If you need to leave your bird unexpectedly, the feeder will ensure his daily feeding schedule.
- Keep a catch net, heavy towel, blanket or sheet and cage liner on hand at all times.

### **Special Considerations for Reptiles**

- Snakes can be transported in a pillowcase (use caution with venomous animals), but a secure cage should be provided when a safe place has been reached.
- Take a sturdy bowl that is large enough for the snake to soak in. It is also a good idea to bring along a heating pad or other warming device, such as a hot water bottle.

### **Special Considerations for Small Animals**

- Small animals, such as hamster, gerbils, mice and guinea pigs should be transported in secure carriers with bedding materials, food and food bowls.
- Keep a salt lick, extra water bottle, small hidebox or tube and a week's worth of bedding on hand.