

## **Emergency Pet Preparedness**

The events of September 11, 2001 served as a reminder of the importance of emergency pet preparedness. Countless pets in residential buildings surrounding the World Trade Center were left helpless when their owners were either forced to flee or were unable to return to their homes. The ASPCA headquarters worked to help in the only way we know how – by providing medical and rescue assistance to New York City’s pets. Ultimately it led to this nationwide Emergency Pet Preparedness initiative. Emergencies come in many forms and they may require anything from a brief absence from your home to permanent evacuation. And each type of disaster requires different measures to keep your pets safe. The best thing you can do for yourself and your pets is to BE PREPARED.

### **Step 1 – Rescue Alert Sticker**

This easy-to-use sticker will let people know that pets are in your home, in case you cannot. The card must be visible to rescue workers. It must contain 1) the types and number of pets in your household; 2) the name of your veterinarian; and 3) your veterinarian’s phone number.

Fill out our order form ([www.aspca.org](http://www.aspca.org)) for an emergency pet alert sticker for your home (please allow 6-8 weeks for delivery). You may also contact your local pet supply store to determine if they carry similar stickers for purchase.

### **Step 2 – Arrange a Safe Haven**

Arrange a safe haven for your pets in the event of evacuation. **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR PETS BEHIND.** If you do, they are at risk for injury or even worse. Red Cross disaster shelters do not accept pets because of health and safety regulations. It is 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 for use in the event of an emergency.
- Check with your local animal shelter to determine if they provide emergency shelter or foster care for pets.
- Identify hotels or motels outside of your immediate area that accept pets.
- Ask friends and relatives outside your immediate area if they would be willing to take in your pet.

### **Step 3 – Emergency Supplies and Traveling Kit**

Keep an emergency kit handy for your pets. This kit should contain the following:

- Pet first-aid kit and guide book
- Canned (pop-top) or dry food
- Disposable litter trays (aluminum roasting pans are perfect)
- Litter or paper toweling
- Pet feeding dishes

- Extra leash
- Photocopies of medical records and a waterproof container with a supply of any medicine your pet requires. (Remember that food and medications need to be rotated out of your emergency kit otherwise they will go bad or become useless.)
- Bottled water
- A pet traveling bag or sturdy carrier, ideally for each pet
- Flashlight
- Blanket (for scooping up a fearful pet)
- Photos of your pet (in case you are separated and need to make posters)

#### **Step 4 – Choose “Designated Caregivers”**

This is something that should take considerable time and thought. You should make plans for a temporary home for your pets in the event of an emergency. (And also make arrangements for a permanent home in the event you can no longer care for your pet.)

When choosing a temporary caregiver, consider someone who lives close to your residence. He or she should be someone that is generally home during the day while you are at work or has easy access to your home. A set of keys should be given to this trusted individual. This may work well with a neighbor who has pets of their own. (You may even swap responsibilities depending upon who has accessibility.)

When choosing a permanent caregiver, other criteria should be considered. This is a person to whom you are entrusting the care of your pet in the event something should happen to you. When selecting “foster parents”, choose 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 he or she understands the responsibility of caring for your pet.

Additionally, you will want to provide a trust for your pet’s financial future.

Unlike a will, a trust provides for your pet immediately, and can apply not only if you die, but if you become disabled. You may designate your permanent caregiver the trustee, or choose a separate person to be the trustee of the funds that you have set aside for your pet’s care.

*Contact your attorney for more information on trusts, wills and how much money to set aside for your pet’s needs in the event you are unable to care for them.*

#### **Step 5 – Evacuation Preparation**

Time is of the essence when you must evacuate your home in a crisis. To minimize evacuation time, take these simple steps:

- Store and emergency kit and leashes as close to an exit as possible.
- Make sure all pets are collared with up-to-date identification. Your pet’s tag should contain his name, telephone number and any urgent needs.
- The ASPCA recommends microchipping your pet for the most permanent identification. (A microchip is implanted in the animal’s shoulder and can be read by scanner at most local animal shelters.)

- Always bring a pet indoors at the first sign of warning or a storm or disaster. Pets can become disoriented and wander away from home in 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.

## **Step 6 – Geographic and Climatic Considerations**

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

- Locate rooms well in advance that offer safe havens. In other words, selected rooms are clear of hazards such as windows, debris, etc...
- Choose easy-to-clean areas such as utility rooms, bathrooms and basements as safe zones.
- Access to a supply of fresh water is particularly important. In areas that may lose electricity, fill up bathtubs and sinks ahead of time to ensure you have access to water during a power outage and other more foreseeable crises.
- In the event of flooding, look for the highest location in your home, or for a room with access to counters or high shelves where your animals can take shelter.

## **About Other Pets**

### **Birds**

- Birds should be transported in a secure travel cage or carrier.
- In cold weather, make certain you have a blanket over the cage. This may also help reduce the stress of traveling.
- In warm weather, carry a spray bottle to moisten your bird's feathers periodically.
- Have photos available and leg bands on for identification.
- If the carrier does not have a perch, line it with paper towels and change those frequently.
- 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 its daily feeding schedule.

### **Reptiles**

- Snakes may be transported in a pillowcase, but you should have permanent and secure housing for them when they reach a safe place.
- Take a bowl of water with you that is large enough for soaking, and bring a heating pad.
- Lizards should be transported like birds.

### **Small Animals**

- Animals such as hamsters, gerbils, mice, guinea pigs, etc., should be transported in secure carriers with bedding materials, food and food bowls.