

## **Disaster Preparations for Pet Owners**

Pet owners should plan ahead to evacuate with their pets during a disaster. Create your pet's disaster kit today.

Does anyone really expect, let alone plan for, that one day when their home, vehicle, possessions and all means of communication will suddenly be gone?

It happens to many people every year during hurricane and tornado season. No matter where you live, the unexpected can occur. Disasters come in all forms. From blizzards to wildfires, earthquakes to hurricanes, terrorist attacks to floods, emergencies occur in all parts of the country, which means that everyone should have a disaster plan for their family—including one for pets.

The City of Palm Coast Animal Control advocates that residents in coastal areas plan ahead to care for animals if disaster strikes, especially when forecasts call for an above-average hurricane season.

### **You Can (and Should) Take Your Pets With You**

With pets in more than 60 percent of American households, weathering a disaster requires having a plan that includes them. Be prepared to take pets with you if evacuation orders are issued, The City of Palm Coast advises. If it isn't safe for you, it isn't safe for your pets. If you are ordered to shelter in place, bring your pets inside with you.

Pet owners can reduce their animal's chances of being at risk during a disaster by following the suggestions below.

#### **Things you can do right now:**

- Put a collar with visible identification on your pets, including indoor only pets.
- Take pictures of you with your pets for identification purposes.
- Create a pet emergency kit (see below) and refresh the items every few months.
- Talk to your neighbors about how they can help your pets if you are not at home when disaster strikes.
- Create a list of hotels that allow pets. Plan on evacuating about 100 miles inland. (Websites available are [PetsWelcome.com](http://PetsWelcome.com) and [WagWorld.com](http://WagWorld.com))

#### **Pet emergency kits should include:**

- A three-or-more-day supply of food in airtight, waterproof containers and drinking water.
- Bowls for food and water (or water bottles if you have small animals like hamsters, guinea pigs or birds).
- Current photos and physical description of your pets, including details on markings. Vaccination Records and Rabies Tag.

- Medications, vaccination records and first-aid pet supplies.
- Comfort items such as a toy and blanket.
- Small garbage bags.
- For dogs include a leash, harness and a sturdy carrier large enough to use as a sleeping area.
- For cats include litter and litter box and a sturdy carrier large enough for transport and for your cat to use as a temporary "apartment" for several days.
- For small animals like birds, guinea pigs, hamsters, ferrets and rabbits, bring a portable cage/carrier and necessary supplies such as bedding/lining for the bottom of the carrier or cage.

### **Should I Stay or Should I Go?**

A Zogby International poll found that 61 percent of pet owners will not evacuate if they cannot bring their pets with them. In 2006, Congress addressed this issue by passing the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards (PETS) Act, which requires state and local emergency management agencies to make plans that take into account the needs of individuals with pets and service animals in the event of a major disaster or emergency. Contact your local emergency management for evacuation plans.