



A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO PET PREPAREDNESS AND SAFETY

If your emergency kit includes provisions for your family pet, you will need to pack much more than a doggie/kitty dish and a bag of dog/cat chow. You'll also need a plan in case you have to leave the area or just shelter in place. Also, family pets are likely to experience extreme stress when emergencies disrupt their routine and sense of security. Their instinct is to run and hide or revert to aggressive defensive behavior as well as forget their house training.

This guide has advice on the plans you need to make, the supplies you should gather, and other factors you should consider to help your pet survive an emergency.

It also covers the basics for family dogs, cats, and other small animals. For large animals and livestock, see the U.S. Humane Society's web page, [Disaster Preparedness for Farm Animals](#), for further information and links to other resources.



BUILD A PET SURVIVAL KIT



Ready.gov has a good general guide for stocking a pet survival kit. The goal is to include basic survival and comfort items to keep your pet calm. This resource provides a link to a downloadable pamphlet with a list of basics you should include in your pet survival kit. The list includes:

- **Food** - a three-day supply in an airtight, waterproof container.
- **Water** - three days of water specifically for your pets. Remember that a 70-pound dog will require about as much water a day as a human.
- **Medical** - medications and medical records.
- **First Aid Kit** - cotton bandage rolls, bandage tape and scissors; antibiotic ointment; flea and tick prevention; latex gloves, isopropyl alcohol and saline solution. Including a pet first aid reference book is a good idea too.
- **Restraints** - collar or harness with ID tag, rabies tag and a leash.
- **Crate or pet carrier** - a sturdy, safe crate or carrier in case you need to evacuate. The carrier should be large enough for your pet to stand, turn around and lie down.
- **Sanitary supplies** - pet litter and litter box if appropriate, newspapers, paper towels, plastic trash bags and household chlorine bleach.
- **Documents** - registration information and vaccination documents.
- **Toys and treats** - familiar items, such as toys and bedding can help reduce stress for your pet.

In an emergency, you may need a quick "grab-and-go" bag. You may not have the time to gather up everything when a fast escape is paramount. See the Nexis Response Pet Emergency Kits product page for complete dog and cat emergency kits. Each has food and water with a five-year shelf life, along with other emergency necessities.

BEST BEFORE 05/20

Special note: Whether you buy or pre-position your own pet supply kit, you should periodically inventory and replace expired or obsolete items. Include pet preparedness in your family disaster reaction plans. September is National Preparedness Month. Designate a family member to take charge of the pet kit as well as how the family pet fits into your emergency stay-at-home or evacuation plans.



HAVE A PLAN

Now that you have gathered and stored your pet survival kit, it is time to think about how your family pet will affect your overall emergency reaction plan. Your planning will depend on the type of disaster, but should never include leaving your pet unattended at home, except under the most extreme circumstances.

SHELTERING IN PLACE

- Bring your pets inside immediately. Animals have instincts about severe weather changes and will often isolate themselves if they are afraid. Bringing them inside early can stop them from running away.
- Have newspapers on hand for sanitary purposes.
- Feed the animals moist or canned food so they will need less water to drink.
- Separate dogs and cats. Even if your dogs and cats normally get along, the anxiety of an emergency situation can cause pets to act irrationally.
- Keep small pets away from cats and dogs.
- Confine your pet to an interior safe room that is pet-friendly and has no (or just a few) windows.
- Remove hazardous items such as toxic chemicals or plants.
- For cats, close off small areas—vents, furniture spaces, etc.—where the frightened pet might get stuck.

ON THE ROAD

We repeat: If you evacuate your home, **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR PETS BEHIND** unless you have no alternative. Pets most likely cannot survive on their own; and if by some remote chance they do, you may not be able to find them when you return.

PLAN TO SHELTER YOUR PETS

If you are unable to return to your home right away, you may need to board your pet. Find out where pet boarding facilities are located. Be sure to research some outside your local area in case local facilities close. Remember that most public shelters will not admit pets, except for service animals.

Call your local emergency management office, animal shelter, or animal control office to get advice and information. Most boarding kennels, veterinarians and animal shelters will need your pet's medical records to make sure all vaccinations are current. Include copies in your "pet survival" kit along with a photo of your pet.

IF YOU MUST LEAVE YOUR PET AT HOME

If you have no alternative but to leave your pet at home, there are some precautions you must take, but remember that leaving your pet at home alone can place your animal in great danger. Also, follow these guidelines:

- Confine your pet to a safe area inside -- **NEVER** leave your pet chained outside!
- Leave your pet loose inside your home with food and plenty of water. You should consider purchasing a timed, automatic pet feeder and training your pet to use it at specific times with specific food amounts.
- For emergency water reserves, remove the toilet tank lid, raise the seat and brace the bathroom door open so they can drink.
- Place a notice outside in a visible area advising what pets are in the house and where they are located. Provide a phone number where you or a contact can be reached as well as the name and number of your vet.

Before disaster strikes, **Petfinder.com** suggests pet owners set up a buddy system in their neighborhood to, if possible, check up on each others' pets during an emergency. You should exchange pet health information and place a permission slip in your file at the vet, authorizing the "buddy" to obtain necessary emergency treatment for the pet in the absence of the owner.

AFTER THE DISASTER

In the first few days after the disaster, leash your pets when they go outside. Always maintain close contact. Familiar scents and landmarks may be altered, and your pet may become confused and lost. Also, snakes and other dangerous animals may be brought into the area in flood areas. Downed power lines are a hazard.

The behavior of your pets may change after an emergency. Normally quiet and friendly pets may become aggressive or defensive. Watch animals closely. Leash dogs and place them in a fenced yard with access to shelter and water.

FINDING A LOST PET

Talk to your veterinarian about microchipping and enrolling your pet in a recovery database. Take a picture of you and your pet together. If you become separated, a picture of you and your pet together will help you document ownership and allow others to assist you. Add species, breed, age, sex, color and distinguishing characteristics.

SUMMARY

Include your family pets in your disaster preparedness. You should gather up a survival kit and have an at-home or alternative boarding plan. Do not leave your pet at home alone. If you must leave your pet, make your home pet-safe, with food and water supplies. Include implanting a microchip as part of your plan to find your pet if it wanders away.

Talk to your veterinarian about microchipping and enrolling your pet in a recovery database.



RESOURCES

Many resources are as listed and linked within the text of this document. Other resources include:
<http://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/pet-disaster-preparedness>

<https://bestfriends.org/resources/disaster-preparedness-pets>

<https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/general-pet-care/disaster-preparedness>

Check out this short FEMA instructional video, Preparing Makes Sense for Pet Owners:
<https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/videos/78847>