

# Preparing Your Pets for Emergencies

The recent fires in southern California caused tremendous havoc for people who had to evacuate with their pets. Often only given moments' notice to evacuate, pet owners only had time to take a few possessions, their pets, and flee to safety. Earthquakes, terrorist attacks, and other emergencies can cause similar situations. In order to help you be prepared in case you and your pets face an emergency evacuation, the Department offers the following advice.

## BE PREPARED

**Have an emergency kit prepared** and readily accessible for you to grab in an emergency. The last thing you should have to do in a time like this is search for scattered necessities. The kit should include:

- 1 A file with copies of your pet's current vaccinations, microchip information, licensing receipts, contact information for your pet's veterinarian, list of necessary medications, and care and feeding instructions.
- 2 Three days' supply of food and water, including a can opener and spoon.
- 3 Cat litter and disposable cat litter boxes.
- 4 Leashes, harnesses, or other carrying and handling necessities.
- 5 A toy that your pet would enjoy in a strange environment.
- 6 Current photographs of your pets for identification purposes in case they are placed into temporary housing.
- 7 Written special behavioral information – your pet's fears, likes, dislikes, etc., that you can give a temporary caretaker.
- 8 Pooper scooper bags to clean up after your dog.

9 Collapsible crates to contain and protect your pets in evacuation centers.

10 Pet first-aid supplies

**Know where you will take your animals.** Identify friends and family your pets can stay with when you are displaced. If you do not have these resources, identify boarding kennels or veterinary hospitals where your pets can stay. Visit these facilities in advance to ensure they meet your standards and that your pet will be comfortable in these environments. Horse owners should identify other boarding facilities that can be used in an emergency.

**Identify your animals.** Make sure all your pets wear proper, current identification and licensing tags. Microchip your pets in case their tags are lost. Animals without identification are much more difficult to be reunited with their families, and overwhelmed animal shelters in the times of emergencies may not recognize your animal even if you have left a photograph and a description with them. Horses should have the owner information written on their halter or engraved on a halter tag.

**Maintain current vaccinations for your animals.** This will protect their health if they are housed with unvaccinated or ill animals. Also, some animal facilities will not admit animals that are not currently vaccinated.

**Have an "evacuation buddy".** If possible, make arrangements with a trusted neighbor or other person who can evacuate your animals for you if you are not home at the time of the emergency. Inform them of the location of your emergency kit and give them a key or method to rescue your animals. If you are out of town and

are using a pet sitter, make sure they know where the evacuation kit is too. Horse owners should have their information posted at the stable so they can be contacted if their horses are evacuated.

## MANAGE THE CRISIS

Don't evacuate unless you need to, since evacuating when it is not needed will bring unnecessary stress on your pets. However, take advantage of voluntary evacuations. Don't wait until it's too late and the streets are crowded. Be mindful of any health threats to your pets, such as air quality, unsafe structures, or other animals. Provide reassurance to your pet. Make sure it doesn't become overwhelmed with noise or distractions. Provide it with a quiet place such as a crate where it can retreat from the stress.

## WHEN IT'S OVER

Do not return home unless emergency personnel say that it is safe to do so.

Make certain your fences and other containment facilities are intact to prevent escapes. Remember, your pet will be nervous for several weeks after the event so provide reassurance and resume a normal routine as soon as possible. If necessary, schedule a veterinary exam for your pet to make certain its health is intact.

Remember, being prepared for emergencies means you and your pet will better weather the disaster. Some advance planning will ensure a safer and less stressful response for you and your pets!

