



Paws For Pets

Disaster Preparedness...Are You Ready?

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Special points of interest:

Approximately 50% of veterinarians are self employed practice owners. The remainder are employees of private practices, industry, governmental agencies, or schools and universities. Generally, the veterinary medical profession is growing approximately 3% per year.

The veterinary profession's greatest potential growth is in positions in which specifications prefer or require postgraduate education in molecular biology, laboratory animal medicine, toxicology, immunology, diagnostic pathology, environmental medicine, or other specialties.

Countless times people have been told to leave their homes for a "short time", only to find that they cannot return for days or weeks. Even disasters like gas leaks and minor flooding can keep you from tending to your animals for extended periods of time. To prevent situations such as these, prepare ahead of time and **TAKE YOUR ANIMALS WITH YOU.**

It is best to be overly cautious during a disaster warning. Preparing ahead of time and acting quickly are the best ways to keep you and your family, including your animals, out of danger. **Your animals depend on you to be prepared in the event of a disaster situation.**

- Setup an appointment to talk to your veterinarian about planning for your animals during disasters.
- Assemble an animal evacuation kit and first aid kit (details provided in Saving the Whole Family).
- Familiarize yourself with each type of disaster that your area could be affected by, including a hazardous materials spill.
- Develop an evacuation plan for all of your animals.
- Prearrange an evacuation site(s) for your family and your animals.
- Keep written directions to your home near your telephone. This will help you tell emergency responders how to get to your home if you are in a state of panic and in need of rescue, or if a person unfamiliar with your area is the

only person in your home during a disaster.

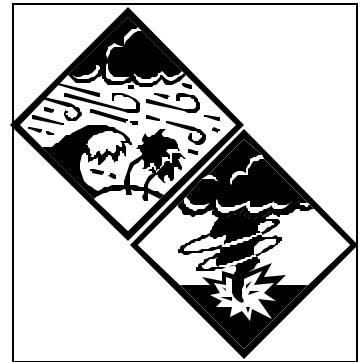
- Identify alternate sources of food and water. Some local food and water sources may be disrupted or contaminated for extended periods of time following a disaster.
- Have backup generators for use in food-animal production operations.
- Keep all vehicles well maintained and full of gas.
- Keep emergency cash on hand.

In Case You Are Not At Home

Preplace stickers on front and back house doors, barn doors, and pasture entrances to notify neighbors, fire fighters, police, and other rescue personnel that animals are on your property and where to find your evacuation supplies. Provide a list near your evacuation supplies of the number, type, and location of your animals, noting favorite hiding spots, in order to save precious rescue time.

To facilitate a successful rescue, provide muzzles, handling gloves, catch nets, and animal restraints where rescue personnel can find them. Keep in mind that animals may become fractious when frightened.

Designate a willing neighbor to tend to your animals in the event that a disaster occurs when you are not at home. This person should have a key to your home, be familiar with your animals, know your evacuation procedures, and



TAKE YOUR ANIMALS WITH YOU!

know where your evacuation supplies are kept. It is suggested that you sign a letter that releases your neighbor from responsibility should one of your animals become injured and sign a veterinary medical treatment authorization form.

Identification

Having identification on your animals including rabies and license tags, if applicable, will help reunite you and your animal(s) in the event that you are separated. Identification should provide your name, home address, a phone number where you can be reached, and an out-of-state phone number of someone that you will be in contact with during or soon after the disaster/evacuation. If possible, include your veterinarian's name, location, and phone number (a list of identification options is included in Saving the Whole Family).

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Disaster Preparation continued...

Transportation/Housing

The most important step in ensuring the safety of your animals during disasters is making sure that you have adequate transportation methods and equipment and a prearranged evacuation site for all of your animals (detailed information is available in Saving the Whole Family).

List of Important Emergency Contacts

Prepare a list of emergency contacts before a disaster strikes. Include addresses and 24-hour contact numbers, if available. These contacts can be used by rescue personnel responding to a disaster affecting your animals or by you during a disaster or an evacuation. Keep one copy near your telephone and one copy in your animal evacuation kit.

- Numbers where you may be reached (pager, cell phone, work phone).
- Your prearranged evacuation site.
- Local contact person in case of emergency when you are not available.
- Out-of-state contact person in case the disaster is far reaching in your locale.
- Your veterinarian
- Alternate veterinarian (30-90 miles away, provides boarding)
- Boarding facility (local)
- Boarding facility (30-90 miles away)
- Hotels that allow pets (90 mile radius)
- Local Animal Control
- Local Police Department
- Local Fire Department
- Local Public Health Department
- Local Animal Shelter
- Local Red Cross Chapter
- Local Humane Society
- Local Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA)
- United States Department of Agriculture Missing Pet Network (www.missingpet.net)

Evacuation Essentials

An animal evacuation kit and first aid kit will help you to care for your animal(s) in the event of a disaster. The evacuation kit should be assembled in an easy-to-carry, waterproof container. It should be stored in an easily accessible location away from areas with temperature extremes. Replace the food, water,

and medications as often as needed to maintain their quality and freshness and in accordance with the expiration dates. Indicate, if needed, medications that are stored elsewhere due to temperature requirements such as refrigeration.

Consult your veterinarian for advice on making an animal evacuation kit and first aid kit that is appropriate for your individual animals. It is important that you become familiar with the items in your kit and their uses. Your veterinarian may recommend an animal first aid book to include in your kit. Consult your veterinarian regarding emergency first aid procedures and administration of any medications. (Suggested items to include in evacuation and first aid kits are listed in Saving the Whole Family).

Veterinary Records/Medical History

Make photocopies of important veterinary documents to store in your animal evacuation kit.

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I. Vaccination records

Vaccination type and date
Rabies certificate, if applicable

II. Medical history

Important test results (Felv/FIV, Heartworm, Coggins, TB, other infectious diseases)
Medical conditions

Proof of Ownership

Make copies of registration information, adoption papers, proof of purchase, and microchip information to store in the evacuation kit. List

each one of your animals and their species/breed, age, sex, color, and distinguishing characteristics.

Keep current photographs of your animals in the evacuation kit for identification purposes. Include yourself in some of the photos to help you reclaim your lost animal(s). Consider preparing laminated "Lost Pet" signs with your animal's photo attached, your name, and your contact information to use in case your animal is lost.

THE AMERICAN VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding in May 1993 with the Office of Emergency Preparedness of the U.S. Public Health Service. With this memorandum, the AVMA formed Veterinary Medical Assistance Teams (VMAT) that became incorporated into the Federal Response Plan for disaster relief as part of the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS). In 1994, the AVMA signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the United States Department of Agriculture forming a partnership during foreign animal disease outbreaks and emerging animal diseases. In 1998, the AVMA and the American Veterinary Medical Foundation signed a Statement of Understanding with the American Red Cross recognizing the American Veterinary Medical Association and the American Veterinary Medical Foundation as the only national organizations representing the entire profession of licensed veterinarians, solely responsible for the diagnosis, treatment, health and well-being of all animals, including and during periods designated as disaster relief.

THE AMERICAN VETERINARY MEDICAL FOUNDATION

The American Veterinary Medical Foundation (AVMF) is a 501(c)(3) foundation that raises and disburses funds for initiatives supporting veterinary care, veterinary education, and veterinary practice. Founded in 1963, contributions made to the AVMF are tax deductible. The AVMF Disaster Relief Emergency Fund provides support for emergency aid for the

Disaster Preparedness continued...

health, safety, and welfare of animals affected by disasters, emergency preparedness, and the Veterinary Medical Assistance Teams.

THE VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TEAMS

Some disasters create a need for additional veterinary assistance. The Veterinary Medical Assistance Teams (VMAT) treat animals that are affected by or injured in disasters when the local veterinary community is overwhelmed. They are deployed when their assistance is requested by state or local offi-

cials and authorized by federal authorities.

The VMAT consist of veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and support personnel who are capable of responding within 24-48 hours of notification. The VMAT are capable of addressing veterinary and public health issues associated with a disaster, and they can establish a field veterinary hospital if requested to do so. They coordinate the animal relief efforts in cooperation with the state veterinarian, state and local veterinary medical asso-

ciations, state and local officials, local veterinary community, animal control officials, and the responding humane organizations. They operate as part of the Federal Response Plan when activated by the U.S. Public Health Service, the agency responsible for developing the medical response component for the National Disaster Medical System.



Help for Fat Cats

Cats gain weight in the same way people do: by consuming too many calories and not exercising enough. The key to maintaining your cat's healthy weight is to decrease the amount of food he eats while making sure he gets enough play and exercise to counteract the effects of his less-active indoor lifestyle.

If you're planning to switch your cat to a reduced-calorie food, you have plenty of options. Nearly all of the major manufacturers of super-premium-brand pet foods make a formula for less-active cats. Ask your vet for a recommendation if you're not sure which to choose. In fact, it's a good idea to *consult a vet any time you make a change in your pet's diet.*

Feline fitness is fun

But diet is only half the battle. You should make time daily for at least a 15-minute play session to be sure your kitty gets enough exercise. Use toys—they may be the key to your success in getting him active enough to burn off calories.

Other cats seem to need a little more stimulus before they'll start running, stretching, and pouncing. Try to wave a feather wand around a lot to get your my cat moving. Cats can't resist the colorful feather's movement, be-

cause it simulates a flying bird. (When your cat triumphs by destroying the feather teaser—and trust me, he will eventually—you can buy replacements!)

If it's been a long day at the office, try using a laser pointer toy like the Lazer Mouse. It's a small, mouse-shaped toy with a button. When you press the button, the toy shoots a red laser light that you can move wherever you want. Many cats (and some dogs and fish) are entranced by the moving dot of light and will follow it wherever it goes, even if that means running laps around the living room. (Remember, no one—human or feline—should make direct eye contact with the laser. Never point it at your cat.)

Good luck in getting your cat closer to his optimum weight! Helping your cat shape up can be a bonding experience. With all of the extra attention and exercise, you can't help but grow closer.

Weight-control tips for chubby cats

Never try to reduce your cat's weight by dramatically decreasing the amount of food he eats. In overweight cats, fasting can bring on fatty liver disease, which can be fatal.

Here are some tips for getting your cat on a healthier track:

- First, consult a veterinarian.** He or she can help you develop a health-conscious feline weight control regimen.

- Transition your cat to a reduced calorie formula food slowly.** Mix it into his regular food for a week or so, reducing the amount of original food while increasing the reduced calorie food incrementally, until your cat is eating only the reduced calorie food. (Remember: Leave plenty of fresh water available at all times!)

- Make sure your cat gets at least 15 minutes of interactive play per day.**

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Disabled Pets Can Lead A Good Life

Advances in veterinary medicine have made it possible for many injured pets to continue on to lead happy and healthy lives. Not only can pets continue to lead quality lives with their disabilities, but they can also show other pet owners that animals are able to adapt.

Many pet owners face difficult decisions in regard to their animal's health and well-being. People have to decide what they want from their pet, what they feel their pet would be happiest with, and how they, as owners, can handle it.

The individual personality of the pet makes a difference, as well as the owner being prepared for some of the nursing care and rehabilitation that comes with getting the animal ready for whatever level of function it's going to have. It's a time commitment, and for some people it's not an option to take several days or weeks off to really adapt with the animal to the new situation.

Some people just don't have the abilities or just don't think they could do it emotionally, so there are a lot of different decisions to make in regard to having a disabled pet.

Pets: Just What the Doctor Ordered?

An overwhelming number of pet owners consider their critters just as important as diet and exercise for contributing to better health.

According to a recent national survey, 92% of pet owners attributed reduced stress levels, improved mental health and physical fitness, and lower blood pressure to spending time with their companion animals.

The annual survey conducted by the AAHA of 1,242 pet owners through its members in the United States, Puerto Rico, and Canada revealed that 97% of those surveyed say their pets make them smile at least once a day. Of the survey respondents:

- 76% believe their pet eases their stress level
- 31% say providing exercise for a pet had improved their physical fitness
- 84% cited companionship as the main

- reason for acquiring a pet
- 85% believe their pet shows concern when they are sick
 - 73% would spend \$1,000 or more to save their pet's life
 - 48% have taken up to two days off work to be with a sick pet
 - 93% take their pet to a veterinarian for regular checkups
 - 28% have taken their pet to a veterinary specialist for advanced care
 - 66% travel with their pet
 - 46% plan all or most of their free time around their pet

"Pets are becoming more than just a member of the family" said Dr. Link Welborn, AAHA president-elect. "They are central to a healthy lifestyle and as a result, pet owners are going to greater lengths to keep their pets happy and healthy."



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