



DISASTER PREPAREDNESS FOR ANIMALS



Tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, blizzards, barn fires, drought, wildfires, hazardous material spills – disasters can strike anytime, anywhere. If you think you don't have to plan for disasters unless you live in a floodplain, near a fault line, or in a coastal area, you may be tragically mistaken. It is important that you make plans to protect your family, your animals, your property and your facilities. In the event of a disaster, proper preparation will pay off with the safety of your family and animals.

PETS AND DISASTER

Here are some steps you can take to be better prepared to care of your pets in a disaster.

IF YOU EVACUATE, TAKE YOUR PETS

The single most important thing you can do to protect your pets if you evacuate is to take them with you. If it's not safe for you to stay, it's not safe for your pets. Animals left behind in a disaster can easily become injured, lost, or killed. Animals left inside your home may escape through storm damaged areas such as broken windows. Animals turned loose to fend for themselves are likely to become victims of exposure, starvation, predators, accidents, or contaminated food or water. If you leave and think you may be gone only a few hours, take your animals. Once you leave your home you have no way of knowing when you will be allowed back into the area, and you may not be able to get back for your pets. Leave early – don't wait for a mandatory evacuation order. If you wait to be evacuated by emergency officials, you may be told to leave your pets behind.

DON'T FORGET ID

Your pets should be wearing up to date identification at all times. It's a good idea to include an emergency phone number that will be answered even if you are out of your home. Wrap a piece of masking tape around your pet's collar to write the emergency phone number on.

FIND A SAFE PLACE AHEAD OF TIME

Because evacuation shelters generally don't accept pets, you must plan ahead to ensure that your family and pets will have a safe place to stay. Don't wait until disaster strikes to try to find a place. Contact hotels and motels outside your immediate area to check policies on accepting pets. Make a list of pet-friendly places and keep it handy. Call for a reservation as soon as you think you might have to leave home. Check with friends or relatives outside of your immediate area to see if they could house your pets if necessary. Make a list of boarding facilities and veterinary offices that may be able to keep your pets in an emergency.

DISASTER SUPPLIES FOR PETS

Stock up on nonperishables well ahead of time. Store items in sturdy waterproof containers. Include food and water for at least three days for each pet, bowls, cat litter and litter box. Medications and medical records, and a pet first aid book is also good to include. In case you have to board your pets or place them in foster care include information on feeding schedules, medical conditions, behavior problems, and the number of your veterinarian. Include sturdy leashes, harnesses, carriers and current photos in case you become separated. Other useful items include newspapers, paper towels, trash bags, blankets or towels, and toys to help reduce stress.

IF YOU DON'T EVACUATE

If your family and pets must wait out the disaster at home, identify a safe area of your home where you can all stay together. Keep dogs on leashes and cats in carriers, and make sure they are wearing ID. Have a supply of food, water and medications inside watertight containers, along with your other emergency supplies.

AFTER THE STORM

Your home may be a very different place after a disaster strikes. Familiar landmarks and smells might be gone, and your pet may be disoriented. Pets can easily get lost in such situations so don't let them roam loose. Keep dogs on leashes and cats inside the house for a few days.

LIVESTOCK AND DISASTER

It is imperative that you be prepared to protect your livestock, whether by evacuating or by sheltering in place.

TAKE PRECAUTIONS

Create a list of emergency phone numbers, including those of your employees, neighbors, veterinarian, department of agriculture, county extension office, local animal care and control, animal transport resources, and local volunteers. Include a contact person outside the disaster area. Write down all this information and give everyone a copy. Make sure every animal has durable and visible identification. Ensure that poultry have access to high areas in which to perch if they are in a flood prone area. Reinforce your barn and outbuildings, and perform regular safety checks on all utilities, buildings, and facilities on your farm. Remove all barbed wire and consider routing permanent fencing so that animals may move to high ground in a flood and to low-lying areas in high wind events. Identify alternate water sources since water supplies and wells are often contaminated during a disaster. A generator with a safely stored fuel supply may be essential, especially if you have electrical equipment necessary to the well being of your animals. Secure or remove anything that could become blowing debris, including trailers, propane tanks and other large objects. If you have boats, feed troughs or other large containers, fill them with water before any high wind event. This prevents them from blowing around and also gives you an additional supply of water. Label hazardous materials and place them all in the same safe area.

SHELTERING IN PLACE

If evacuation is not feasible, a decision must be made whether to confine large animals in available shelter on your farm or leave them out in pastures. Owners may believe their animals are safer inside barns, but in many circumstances confinement takes away the animals ability to protect themselves. This decision should be based on the type of disaster and the soundness and location of the shelter building. Large animals may be better off in the pasture if there are no overhead power lines, no blowing debris sources, and no barbed wire. Whether you evacuate or shelter in place, make sure that you have adequate fencing or pens to separate and group animals appropriately.

BARN FIRES

The Most Common Livestock Disaster

Preventing barn fires and being prepared in the event of a fire can mean the difference between life and death for your livestock. Knowledge of the danger of fires and how to deal with them is of the greatest importance to livestock owners.

FIRE PREVENTION IS KEY

Prohibit smoking in or around the barn. A discarded cigarette can ignite dry bedding or hay in seconds. Avoid parking tractors and vehicles in or near the barn. Store machinery and flammable materials outside of the barn. Inspect electrical systems regularly and immediately correct any problems. Rodents can chew on electrical wiring causing damage that can become a fire hazard. Use appliances such as stall fans, space heaters, and radios only when someone is in the barn. Install a sprinkler system. Be sure hay is dry before storing. Hay that is too moist may spontaneously combust.

BE PREPARED FOR A FIRE

Mount fire extinguishers in all buildings, especially at all entrances. Make sure they are current and that your family and employees know how to use them. Keep aisles, stall doors and barn doors free of debris and equipment. Have a planned evacuation route for every area of your farm, and make sure all family members and employees are familiar with it. Post emergency phone numbers at each phone and entrance. Include numbers of emergency response personnel, veterinarian, and qualified livestock handlers. Be sure your address and entrance to your barn or farm are clearly visible from the road. Install smoke alarms and heat detectors in all buildings that are hooked up to sirens that will quickly alert you and your neighbors to a possible fire. Familiarize your animals with common things that would encounter during a disaster. Try to desensitize them to flashlights and flashing lights.

IN THE EVENT OF A BARN FIRE

Immediately call 911. Do not enter any building if it is already engulfed in flames. If it is safe for you to enter the barn, evacuate animals starting with the most accessible ones. Move animals quickly to a fenced area far enough from the fire and smoke. Never let animals loose in an area where they are able to return to a burning building.

