

This Month Special Edition: Hurricanes

Hurricanes

As a resident of the South Carolina coast, I'm sure you already know a good bit about Hurricanes and how to prepare. But while you are making arrangements for accommodations on higher ground and buying Wal-Mart out of bottled water, please remember to prepare for your pets as well (pets like bottled water too!)

The most important thing to remember about hurricanes and pets is that if conditions are not safe for you, they are not safe for 'Fluffy' or 'Fido' either. If you are evacuating, don't leave them behind to fend for themselves – chances are they will be frightened, escape from the house, and end up hurt or lost in the aftermath of the storm. Also keep in mind that most public shelters for people will not accept pets. If you make a plan now, stock up on the items your pets will need when evacuated, and evacuate well in advance of the storm, your pets will be safe and you will always know where they are throughout the stressful storm period.

Where to stay:

Relatives, friends, or pet-friendly hotels will be your best bet for accommodations while traveling with pets.

A last resort, pet-friendly shelter will be located at the North Charleston Coliseum. Only one owner is allowed per household of pets, and is required to bring supplies for all pets and themselves.

MUSC employees should ask about the Emergency Pet Care Center available to them (3 pets per employee).

What to pack:

Secure carriers, collars, ID tags (rabies as well as the owner's phone#), leashes, food and water bowls, food and water for at least three days to one week, at least three weeks worth of medications, immunization records, a current photograph of each pet, specific care instructions (feeding times, medication instructions, ect), manual can opener, plastic trash bags for cleaning waste, newspapers for kitty litter, litter box, muzzles if necessary, sedatives, and comfort items (blanket, toys, ect).

For a list of pet-friendly hotels in South Carolina, please visit
<http://www.dogfriendly.com/server/travel/guides/us/usstateSC.shtml>

Making a clear plan beforehand can help alleviate problems during evacuations. Get all pets used to their carriers well before an emergency – pets should feel comfortable with their carriers, as they may be living in them for some time during and after the storm. Make sure all belongings are marked with clear information: pet name, owner name, a contact number for the owner and a contact number of someone not in the storm region (this is when those pesky in-laws in Michigan can really come in handy!). Micro-

chipping your pet is also a good idea, so that if they get scared and dart away during the evacuation they can be returned to you.

If your family, friends, or hotel won't allow your pets to stay with you, check out kennels in the area beforehand, and call early to make sure they have room. Also make sure you have a veterinarian in the area in case your pet gets sick while you are away from your own vet. The most important thing you can do while in a strange place is to keep as close to your normal routine as possible.

If you decide to wait out the storm at home, keep pets in a safe area of the house, inside their carriers or crates. During storms pets can become frightened and irritable, changing their normal behavior, and could even bite if they feel threatened. Dogs and cats who are scared and are not properly contained in carriers or crates may escape through damaged portions of the house and get lost in the neighborhood with the possible loss of scent trails and landmarks due to the storm. Keeping their collars and tags on at all times throughout the storm and afterwards will insure that if they do escape they can be easily found and brought back home. Also, be careful of any plants you bring inside to ride out the storm – many ornamental potted plants are toxic to animals and may be ingested by pets.

Post-Storm

Although the storm has passed, the danger to your pets has not. Walk dogs on a leash for a week or two once you return home, to make sure they don't get disoriented in what may seem like a new environment to them. Keep an eye out for downed power lines and other debris that could injure your pet or yourself. Don't let your pet drink from puddles outside that could contain toxic materials spilled during the storm, and also keep them away from any food or water (even tap water) that may have become contaminated. If you keep a tightly sealed, waterproof container with at least two weeks of food in it, and a tightly sealed container with at least two weeks of water, your pet should be safe from contamination. Other things you will want to keep them away from include candles and oil lamps during power outages, or displaced reptiles (like snakes) that may have been brought in with high water levels.

Other tips on Hurricanes and Pets

- Dry pet food is much easier to transport and use than wet pet food; make sure all pet foods are in well-sealed, waterproof containers that are easy to transport.
- Excessive bedding in a crate can become a nuisance if it gets soiled.
- Paper towels, household bleach, pet-safe disinfectants, and extra towels are all important pet-hurricane-kit ingredients.
- If you are going out of town and have a friend or neighbor watching your pet, be sure they know where your emergency supplies are and are acquainted well enough with your pet to move them to a safe place during an evacuation.
- If you can't find a pet-friendly hotel, ask in advance if no-pet hotels might waive their policy for an emergency, such as an evacuation.

- Reptiles, rodents and other exotic pets should be cared for as well during hurricanes. Transport all animals in plastic containers or breathable bags like muslin (not glass!) and call your local pet shop or zoological gardens for advice on sheltering and transporting your pet.
- A first aid kit for pets should contain antibiotic ointment (Neosporin) for minor cuts and scrapes, Benedryl for itchiness (1mg/lb, so a 25lb dog should get one 25mg pill), bandages, tweezers, and a minor sedative like acepromazine (available at your veterinarian's office). Wounds and cuts that are bleeding should have pressure applied, either with a clean cloth or hands. Skin irritations that result from allergies can be given benedryl, while those resulting from a topical toxin should be rinsed thoroughly. Vomiting animals, or those with diarrhea, should be taken off food and water for 24 hours, offering small amounts of water after the first 24 hour period, and then small amounts of food for the next 24 hours. Dogs or cats suffering from heat stroke need to be taken care of immediately! Apply cold water or cool compresses to the neck and chest and get them into a shady area or air conditioning (if the power isn't out). For all emergencies, get them into a veterinarian as soon as possible.
- Always prepare for one category higher than predicted, and make sure you have an evacuation plan and route that includes stopping at the kennel on the way, if you are kenneling your pet during the storm.
- Contaminated tap water can be sanitized for drinking by mixing 2 drops of household bleach per quart of water in a sealed container and letting it stand for at least 30 minutes before drinking. Boiling water can also help sanitize it if your stove is working.
- If your pet is lost, contact animal control. They may be holding animals at a separate location than usual, due to the large numbers of stray pets after storms. Bring a recent photo of your pet for identification.

Special Hurricane-Season offer (good until 12/31/06):
Get \$5 off HomeAgain Microchip Lifetime Registration!
http://www.homeagainpets.com/reg_coupon-5off.html
See website for details.