



# Hurricane Preparedness for Your Pets

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Hurricane season can be a frightening time for those of us living along the Gulf coast of Florida. The key to survival for any emergency situation, including hurricanes, is to be prepared. All persons living in the path of these potentially devastating storms should have a plan in place that encompasses human family members as well as pets. The time to think about an emergency plan is BEFORE you need it!

## **Before the Storm**

Have a plan that covers both scenarios of evacuation and sheltering in place.

Know if you live in an evacuation zone, and if so, what zone you are in.

Pre-plan your evacuation destination:

- A friend or relative OUTSIDE of the evacuation zone.
- Pet friendly hotels OUTSIDE of the evacuation zone.

Know the location of pet friendly evacuation shelters.

- The closest evacuation shelters that take pets in Hillsborough County:
  - Shields Middle School 15732 Beth Shields Way, Ruskin.
  - Burnett Middle School 1010 N. Kingsway Road, Seffner.
  - Bartels Middle School 9020 Imperial Oak Blvd, Tampa.
  - Barrington/Stowers 5925 Village Center Drive, Lithia

- You are responsible for feeding and caring for your pet while in the shelter.
- You must provide all supplies, including a cage/carrier.
- You will not be staying in the same room as your pet.
- You must show proof of licensure and vaccination.

Make sure microchip information is up to date.

- If you have changed any contact information, you **MUST** inform the company to whom the microchip is registered. Microchips are useless if veterinary personnel cannot find you!

Pets should be current on all vaccinations and tests.

- Rabies vaccination is required by law. All other vaccine protocols should be followed as recommended by your veterinarian.

**DO NOT** leave your animal behind. If you evacuate, your pet should evacuate!

Have an animal evacuation kit for your pet. It should be something easy to carry, and waterproof if possible.

**Animal Evacuation Kit:** (Varies according to the type of pet)

Dogs / Cats:

- Vaccine records, especially proof of rabies vaccination
- Microchip number
- Photographs (current) of you with your pet
  - This provides proof of ownership. It also will be useful if your pet gets lost.
- Water for 7 to 14 days
- Food for 7 to 14 days
  - Fresh food (pet food has expiration dates)
  - Non-perishable food is helpful
  - Cans? Bring a **NON**-electric can opener
  - Food and water bowls (no-spill)
  - Stick to the animal's normal diet as much as possible
- Medications for 7 to 14 days
- Cage and/or carrier with contact information on top
  - Should be able to hold two bowls and allow the pet to turn around and lay down comfortably
  - Cats should have room for a litter box
- Leash and collar or harness with your contact information (cell number if away from home)
- Litter pans for cats along with litter, scoop, and a bag for waste

- Poo baggies for dog waste clean-up
- Familiar items to make the animal more relaxed (favorite toys, favorite blanket, etc.)

#### Birds:

- Small sturdy carrier for transport (should be covered to reduce stress)
- A larger cage to use at the destination (covered)
- Cage liners
- Food and water for 7 to 14 days (same food instructions as above)
- Medications for 7 to 14 days
- Spray bottle to help in hot weather

#### Reptiles:

- Sturdy carrier (can use a pillowcase if necessary)
- A larger cage at the destination (make sure it is secure!)
- Food and water for 7 to 14 days (same food instructions as above)
- Medications for 7 to 14 days
- Heat lamps or a heating pad

#### Small animals (hamsters, rabbits, guinea pigs, etc...)

- Many can be transported in their regular habitat
- Food and water for 7 to 14 days (same food instructions as above)
- Bedding material
- Medications for 7 to 14 days

### **When the Storm Comes**

Monitor the local weather channels, and follow the recommendations of the emergency officials.

#### If Sheltering in Place:

- Bring the pets indoors before the inclement weather starts.
- Pet proof your home.
- Have animals wear some form of Identification.
- Don't let animals outside without being on a leash.
  - Animals can become frightened and run off.

- Be careful when opening doors so pets don't run out in a panic.
- Try to reduce the stress level as much as possible. Pets can pick up on owner anxiety.
- Don't coddle pets that are acting anxious. This reinforces the anxious behavior. Instead, put them in a safe place away from the noise.

#### If Evacuating:

- Put collars on pets and put them in their carriers before loading the car (so you are not searching for them when ready to go).
- Don't leave at the last minute. You don't want to be sitting in traffic with your pet.
- Make sure pets are wearing Identification.
- Keep pets separated if necessary.
  - Evacuation can be stressful on everyone. Animals that normally get along may not react normally when stressed.
- Be mindful of the temperature. Heat stroke is very dangerous and can happen very quickly, especially if the animal is already stressed. NEVER leave an animal in a car in the summer, even with the windows cracked. The temperature inside the vehicle can hit 120 degrees very fast!
- Try to keep them on their normal feeding routine once arriving at your destination.
- Minimize stress as much as possible.
- Never walk dogs outside in unfamiliar areas without being on a leash.

### **After the Storm**

Don't let animals loose outdoors

- Debris from the storm can injure your pet.
- Water in the yard may be contaminated.
- Wildlife in the area has been disrupted, so you may see snakes and other dangerous animals.
- The storm can alter familiar scents, so your pet can get lost easily.

Check your home for damage before turning the pet loose inside.

Know if the water is safe to drink.

- If a boil water alert has been issued, this applies to your pet as well.
- If it's not safe for you, it's not safe for your pet.

Try to return to your regular routine as soon as possible.

Your pet may have gastrointestinal upset from stress (diarrhea). If it does not resolve quickly, contact your veterinarian.

Hurricanes and even tropical storms can be very dangerous, especially for those who are not prepared. Complacency is not an option, and can prove to be deadly. You need to have a plan of action, and part of being a responsible pet owner is to include your pets in that emergency plan.

#### Useful Links:

National Hurricane Center

<http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/>

National Hurricane Center Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/US.NOAA.NationalHurricaneCenter.gov>

Hillsborough County Emergency Management website

<http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/index.aspx?NID=115>