



Hurricane Season in Florida:

Make Plans Now to Protect Animals in Weather Emergencies!

Since Florida is prone to hurricane disasters, it is imperative that Floridians make arrangements ahead of time to ensure animals' safety. Please take a moment now to make the following preparations to protect your companion animals.

Evacuation Planning

The single most important thing you can do to protect your companion animals is to take them with you if you evacuate. *If it is not safe for you, it is not safe for them.* There is no way to predict what will happen to your home while you are gone, and you may not be able to return for weeks. Animals left inside your home may become malnourished or dehydrated. In previous storms, animals left in their homes have been crushed by collapsing walls and have drowned in rising flood waters. Animals turned loose to fend for themselves are likely to become victims of exposure, starvation, contaminated food or water, or accidents. Leaving animals tied, chained, or caged in a disaster is a death sentence!

Identification

- Animals should be wearing collars with up-to-date identification at all times. It is a good idea to include the phone number of a friend or relative outside of the immediate area who will answer the phone in case you become separated from your companions and cannot be reached.
- Make sure to bring a recent photo of your companions for identification purposes in case you need to prove that they are yours.

Animal Emergency Kit

Have an animal emergency kit prepared in advance and stored in sturdy containers that can be easily carried if you must evacuate. In your animal emergency kit, you should include:

- Sturdy leashes, harnesses, or carriers to transport your companions safely and to ensure that they can't escape. Carriers should be large enough for your companions to stand up, lie down, and turn around comfortably. Make sure to include bedding and if possible special items such as a favorite toy to reduce stress.
- Enough dry food and bottled water for at least five days, food and water bowls, cat litter and a small litter tray.
- Medications and medical records stored in a waterproof container and a first aid kit.

Find a Place to Go Ahead of Time

Most evacuation shelters do not accept companion animals. You should plan ahead to ensure that you and your companions have a safe place to go.

- Many hotels and motels lift their "no pets" policies during emergencies, but keep a list of hotels that accept companion animals just in case. (Most Motel 6's accept animals.) Contact hotels and motels ahead of time and ask about their policies. If they accept companion animals or will waive their "no pets" policy during a disaster, ask about restrictions on number, size and species. Call ahead for a reservation as soon as you think you might need to leave your home.
- Ask friends and relatives outside of your immediate area if they would be able to shelter you and your animals, or just your animals if necessary.

- Make a list of boarding facilities, veterinary offices, and animal shelters outside of your immediate area that would be willing to shelter animals in emergencies. Include 24-hour telephone numbers. Please remember that shelters are often stretched to their limits during disasters so only use them as a last resort.

If You Must Leave Your Animal Behind

Although ARFF strongly urges you never to leave your animal behind in a disaster, we recognize that some circumstances may prevent responsible guardians from taking their animals. If you are absolutely forced to leave your companions, please take the following precautions to protect them.

- Never turn your companions loose, assuming they will be safer and can get by on instinct. Domesticated animals rely on humans for many things and will be rendered nearly helpless outside in bad weather. It is best to leave them in a secure area inside your home where they can freely roam. Many people have left their animals caged or tethered inside their home, only to return and find that the animals drowned because they couldn't escape the rising waters.
- Fill every bowl, pan or Tupperware container you have with water and set them on the floor throughout the house. Do not leave just one container, in case it is spilled. It is also a good idea to fill sinks with water and leave the toilet seat up if your toilet bowl is free of chemical disinfectants.
- Leave out at least ten days supply of dry food. Canned food will go bad quickly.
- If you can't get home, contact friends or family in the area to see if they can check on the animals and get them out. Supply them with specific care instructions.
- Place an emergency window sticker near your front door in case an emergency strikes while you are not home. The sticker will alert rescuers to animals in your home who may need help. Be sure to note how many animals are in the home and if possible where they can be found.

If You Don't Evacuate

If you and your companion animals must wait out a disaster at home, identify a secure area in your house where you can all stay together.

- Bring all animals into the house.
- Keep dogs on leashes and cats in carriers, and make sure they are wearing identification.
- Have any medications and a supply of dry food and bottled water for at least ten days.
- Make sure your animal emergency kit is ready in case you must leave quickly.

After the Storm

Planning and preparation will help you weather the storm, but your home may be a very different place afterward.

- Don't allow your companion animals to roam loose following an emergency. Familiar landmarks and smells might be gone, and your companion could become easily disoriented and lost.
- Keep your companions on a leash or inside carriers if damage to your house could allow them to escape.
- Try to get them back into their normal routine as soon as possible. Be patient with them if they exhibit behavioral problems as it is likely a result of their stressful experience. If behavioral problems persist or if your companions stop eating or drinking, contact your veterinarian.