

Animals in Disaster



Disaster disrupts and affects everything in its path, including pets, livestock, and wildlife. The following section provides general guidelines for handling animals in emergency and disaster situations.

Pets in disaster

Pets need to be included in your household disaster plan since they depend on you for their safety and well being. It is important to consider and prepare for your pets before disaster strikes. Consider the following preparedness measures:

1. If you must evacuate, do not leave pets behind—there is a chance they may not survive, or get lost before you return.

Be sure to include your pets in your household disaster plan.

2. With the exception of service animals, pets are not typically permitted in emergency shelters for health reasons.
3. Find out before a disaster which local hotels and motels allow pets and where pet boarding facilities are located. Be sure to include some outside your local area in case local facilities have closed.
4. Know that most boarding facilities require veterinarian records to prove vaccinations are current.
5. Only some animal shelters will provide care for pets during emergency and disaster situations. They should be used as a last resort. Use friends and family or keep them with you.
6. Be sure your pet has proper identification tags securely fastened to the collar. A current photo of your pet will assist identification should it become necessary.
7. Make sure you have a secure pet carrier or leash for your pet—they may need to be restrained during tense emergency situations.
8. Assemble a disaster kit for your pet. Include pet food, water, medications, veterinary records, litter box, can opener, food dishes, first aid kit, other supplies that may not be available at a later time, and an information sheet with pet's name and such things as behavior problems. Provide the kit to whomever assumes responsibility for your pet during a disaster.
9. Call your local emergency management office or animal shelter for further information.

Large animals in disaster

If you have large animals, such as horses or cattle on your property, be sure to prepare before a disaster.

1. Evacuate animals whenever possible. Map out primary and secondary routes in advance.
2. Evacuation destinations should be prepared with, or ready to obtain, food, water, veterinary care, and handling equipment.
3. Vehicles and trailers needed for transporting and supporting each type of animal should be available along with experienced handlers and drivers. It is best to allow animals a chance to become accustomed to vehicular travel so they are less frightened and easier to move.
4. In case evacuation is not possible, animal owners must decide whether to move large animals to shelter or turn them outside. This decision should be based on the disaster type, quality and location of shelter, and the risks of turning them outside.
5. All animals should have some form of identification.

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feel threatened and may endanger themselves by dashing off into floodwaters, fire, etc.

2. If wild animals are trapped or no natural food source is available, you can leave food appropriate to individual animals (i.e., animals could become trapped on an “island” after seeking high ground as floodwaters rise).
3. Wild animals such as snakes, opossums, and raccoons often seek refuge from floodwaters on upper levels of homes and have been known to remain after water recedes. If you encounter animals in this situation—open a window or other escape route and the animal will likely leave on its own. Do not attempt to capture or handle the animal. Should the animal stay, call your local animal control office or animal shelter.
4. If you see an injured or stranded animal, do not approach or attempt to help. Call your local animal control office or animal shelter.
5. Animal carcasses can present serious health risks. Contact your local emergency management office or health department for specific help and instructions.

Wildlife in disaster

Disaster and life threatening situations will exacerbate the unpredictable nature of wild animals. To protect yourself and your household, learn how to deal with wildlife.

1. Be cautious approaching wild animals during emergency situations. Do not corner them. Wild animals will likely

Animals after disaster

Wild or stray domestic animals can pose a danger during or after many types of disaster. Remember, most animals are disoriented and displaced, too. Do not corner an animal. If an animal must be removed, contact your local animal control authorities.

If any animal bites you, seek immediate medical attention. If a snake bites you, try

to accurately identify the type of snake so that, if poisonous, the correct anti-venom can be administered. Do not cut the wound or attempt to suck the venom out.

Certain animals may carry rabies. Although the virus is rare, care should be taken to avoid contact with stray animals and rodents. Health departments can provide information on the types of animals that carry rabies in your area.

Rats may also be a problem during and after many types of disaster. Be sure to

secure all food supplies and contact your local animal control authorities to remove any animal carcasses in the vicinity.

Contact your local emergency manager for more information on animals in disaster. The Humane Society of the United States can be reached at: 2100 L Street, NW, Washington, DC, 20037, Attn: Disaster Services Program or by phone at 202-452-1100 or online at www.hsus.org/disaster.