



JAVMA **news**

AVMA NEWS

June 15, 2000

Disaster preparedness: what to tell your clients

Posted June 1, 2000

An important part of disaster preparedness involves disseminating vital information to clients about the procedures to follow before a catastrophe strikes.

Additional, detailed, disaster planning information can be found in "Saving the Whole Family," a new disaster-preparedness booklet from the AVMA that will be unveiled at the Annual Convention in Salt Lake City. Look for order forms in future *JAVMA* issues. For more information about the Veterinary Medical Assistance Teams and animal issues arising in future, severe disasters, visit our Web site at www.avma.org.



This information can be copied from the *JAVMA* and distributed to clients.

Disasters: are you prepared?

Each year devastating disasters ravage our nation. Many times the animals are the ones that suffer the most. The predicted 2000 hurricane season includes 11 named storms, seven intensifying to hurricanes and three becoming a category 3 or greater hurricane. The season began June 1 and will end Nov 30. Now is the time to prepare for your animals. Do not be fooled into thinking that just because you are not on the coast, a disaster will not affect you also. Remember, for example, the tornadoes, blizzards, floods, earthquakes, hazardous materials spills, and resulting evacuations.

Often, people have been told to leave their homes for a "short time," only to find that they cannot return for days or weeks. Even disasters such as gas leaks and minor flooding can

keep you from tending to your animals for extended periods of time. To prevent situations such as these, prepare ahead of time, and take your animals with you.

Your animals depend on you to be prepared. Here are some suggestions.

- Set up an appointment to talk to your veterinarian about planning for your animals during disasters.
- Assemble an animal evacuation kit and first aid kit (details provided in "Saving the Whole Family").
- Develop a disaster plan for each type of disaster that your area could be affected by, including a hazardous materials spill.
- Develop an evacuation plan for all of your animals.
- Prearrange an evacuation site(s) for your family and your animals.
- Keep written directions to your home near your telephone. This will help you tell emergency responders how to get to your home if you are in a state of panic and in need of rescue, or if a person unfamiliar with your area is the only person in your home during a disaster.
- Identify alternate sources of food and water.
- Have backup generators for use in food-animal production operations.
- Keep all vehicles full of gas.
- Keep emergency cash on hand.

In case you are not at home

Preplace stickers on front and back house doors, barn doors, and pasture entrances to notify neighbors, firefighters, police, and other rescue personnel that animals are on your property and where to find your evacuation supplies. Provide a list near your evacuation supplies of the number, type, and location of your animals, noting favorite hiding spots, in order to save precious rescue time.

To facilitate a successful rescue, provide muzzles, handling gloves, catch nets, and animal restraints where rescue personnel can find them. Animals may become fractious when frightened.

Designate a willing neighbor to tend to your animals in the event that a disaster occurs when you are not at home. This person should have a key to your home, be familiar with your animals, and know your evacuation procedures and where your supplies are kept. It is suggested that you provide a signed letter that releases your neighbor from responsibility, should one of your animals become injured, and a signed veterinary medical treatment authorization form.

Identification

Having identification on your animals, including rabies and license tags, if applicable, will help reunite you and your animals in the event you are separated. Identification should provide your name, home address, a phone number where you can be reached, and an out-of-state phone number of someone with whom you will be in contact during or soon after the disaster/evacuation. If possible, include your veterinarian's name, location, and phone number.

Transportation/housing

The most important step in ensuring the safety of your animals during disasters is providing for adequate transportation methods and equipment, and a prearranged evacuation site for all your animals.

Veterinary records/medical history

Make photocopies of important veterinary documents to store in your animal evacuation kit.

- Vaccination records
- Rabies certificate, if applicable
- Medical history
- Important test results (FeLV/FIV, heartworm, Coggins, TB, other infectious diseases)
- Medical conditions

Proof of ownership

Make copies of registration information, adoption papers, proof of purchase, and microchip information to store in the evacuation kit. List each of your animals and their species/breed, age, sex, color, and other distinguishing characteristics.

Keep current photographs of your animals in the evacuation kit for identification purposes. Include yourself in some of the photos to help you reclaim your lost animals.

Prepared by Dr. Cindy Lovern, assistant director of emergency preparedness and response for the AVMA

Copyright © 2014 American Veterinary Medical Association

