

## ***When disasters approach and emergencies occur, will you know what to do with your pets?***

Weather warnings, especially those concerning hurricanes, are often issued days in advance of an approaching storm. At first warning that a disaster may impact your community, make plans to be able to independently care for your family and pets for a minimum of 72 hours. Personal preparedness means having a family plan, and kit to care for yourself and your pets. Advanced planning can also allow you to evacuate safely and quickly with your pet.

Pets, just like other members of your family, have special needs that have to be considered during an evacuation. Take the time to plan ahead and gather supplies now, so you can calmly and efficiently respond to an emergency situation:

- Prepare a pet emergency supply kit
- Develop a “pet friendly” evacuation plan. Know where you can go with your pets and how to get there in advance of an emergency

### ***Plan Ahead and Be Prepared:***

Take the following steps before you leave your home to ensure that your evacuation with your pet goes smoothly. Many of these steps can and should be accomplished before an emergency situation, so you can always be prepared and ready to go:

- Have pet disaster supply kits in a well known location in your house that you can grab at a moment’s notice.
- Don’t leave pets home alone if you must evacuate, you may not be able to return home quickly to get you pets.
- If your pet is on any medications or needs a special diet, bring at least a two-week supply with you.
- While evacuating, don’t leave pets unattended. Remember, even the most trustworthy pets may panic and attempt to escape due to stress.
- Make sure all pets are up to date on their vaccinations, and keep a copy of the vaccination certificate provided by your veterinarian in your pet’s emergency kit.
- Securely fasten collars with up to date identification tags on all cats and dogs. It is a good idea to attach current phone numbers on the back of your pet’s ID tags. Ideally, a microchip or tattoo is the best form of pet identification.
- If you are evacuating to a family member or friend’s house, make sure in advance that your pets are invited as well.
- If you are evacuating to a hotel, call ahead and make sure that they will allow your pets to stay with you. Check online for pet-friendly hotels.

## ***Where to go:***

Never leave your pets behind if you have to evacuate your home. Plan ahead so you know where you are going, and that your pets will be welcome there. Family, friends, and hotels are common evacuation destinations but if these are not an option for you the Commonwealth of Virginia is actively working to ensure that you and your pets have a place to shelter. In the event of an evacuation, you will be informed about public sheltering and transportation options. Stay tuned to the radio or television.

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management are working with communities across the Commonwealth to help ensure that evacuation and sheltering plans for both people and their pets are ready in the event of a disaster. Sheltering plans for people and their pets are being developed across the state to help ensure that no Virginian will have to choose between staying with their pets and evacuating to a safe shelter. These shelters, which may be at a college or university, a local school, fairgrounds or community center, will allow all members of the family (including their pets) to be sheltered together or in close proximity to one another.

Each pet shelter will have trained animal care personnel to assist in the care of your pets, but it will be your responsibility to walk, feed and care for your pets daily.

## ***What to Bring:***

### **Dogs and Cats**

- A week's supply of food (canned or dry)
- Food bowl
- Water bowl
- Leash and collar with current identification and rabies tags
- Proof of vaccinations
- Study, portable crate or kennel for each pet
- All medications, including heartworm preventative and flea and tick protection, that your pets need
- Pet toys or blankets for comfort

### **Birds**

- A secure traveling cage that can accommodate your bird for the entire evacuation, and any heating or cooling equipment you need to keep your bird comfortable
- A supply of feed that is highly palatable to your bird
- Any medications or supplements your bird needs
- Photo identification or leg bands
- Paper to line the cage

## Pocket Pets

- A secure carrier that is appropriate to house the animal for the entire duration of the evacuation
- Highly palatable feed
- Feed and water bowls
- Bedding materials
- Any medications or supplements your pet needs

## Exotic Pets

If you own exotic animals, it is your responsibility to make sure that you have an evacuation plan in place prior to an emergency. Contact your local emergency manager if you are planning to evacuate to a public shelter to make sure your animal can be accommodated. If sheltering with your pet isn't an option, contact species-specific organizations or your local humane society to develop a list of possible foster care or boarding providers.

When evacuating with your exotic pet, bring everything that you need to maintain the animal with you. Ensure that you have an appropriate cage or enclosure, and all heating and other equipment necessary for the animal's well-being. Bring at least a two-week supply of highly palatable feed. Assume that nothing will be available at your evacuation destination and plan accordingly.

## Horses

VDACS reminds horse owners that it is their responsibility to have an emergency disaster plan that includes a plan for evacuating their horses if necessary. It is crucial to carefully consider how you will move your horses and where you will take them before an emergency occurs.

### Tips for Preparing for Hurricane Season

- Be sure your horse is current on all vaccinations recommended by your veterinarian.
- Make sure that all your horses have current Coggins tests. Keep your Coggins test certificates where they are readily accessible, and make sure that you bring them with you if you evacuate.
- Take time to learn more about managing horses in disasters. Resources such as the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service are available. Talk to your neighbors who have horses, and develop a plan for working together to respond to emergencies.
- Keep emergency phone numbers handy. These should include your local Emergency Operations Center, veterinarian, police or sheriff, and fire department.
- If you plan to evacuate in the event of a storm, have a destination and several routes to get there planned well in advance. Plan to leave at least 72 hours before the arrival of the storm to

avoid getting stuck in traffic with your trailer. Let your neighbors know where you are going, and post a notice on your barn or home stating that you evacuated with your horses.

- Prepare a waterproof emergency horse care kit with all the items you may need such as medications and first aid supplies.
- When you return be sure to carefully check your barns, paddocks and pastures for debris or other storm damage that could injure your horses before you unload.
- If you plan to weather the storm at home, here are some guidelines:
  - 1) The choice of keeping your horse in a barn or an open field is up to you. Use common sense, taking into consideration the structural integrity of the barn, flood risk, trees, power lines, and the condition of surrounding properties. Consult with experts prior to an actual emergency to help you make this decision.
  - 2) Remove all items from the barn aisle and walls, and store them in a safe place.
  - 3) Have at least a two- week supply of hay (wrapped in plastic or waterproof tarp) and feed (stored in plastic water-tight containers) on hand.
  - 4) Place these supplies in the highest and driest area possible.
  - 5) Fill clean plastic garbage cans with water, secure the tops, and place them in the barn.
  - 6) Have an emergency barn kit containing a chain saw and fuel, hammers, saw, nails, screws and fencing materials. Place this kit in a secure area before the storm hits.