

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS FOR PETS

MARTHA'S VINEYARD DISASTER ANIMAL RESPONSE TEAM (MV DART)

If you evacuate, take your pets.

The single most important thing you can do to protect your pets is to take them with you when you evacuate. Pets left behind during a disaster can easily be injured, lost, or killed. Pets left inside your home can escape through storm damaged areas, such as window broken by a falling tree. Pets turned loose to fend for themselves are likely to become victims of exposure, starvation, contaminated food or water, or accidents. Leaving your dog(s) tied outside during a disaster is a death sentence!

If you leave, even if you think you're only going to be gone for a few hours, take your pets. Once you leave, you will have no idea how long you'll be kept out of the area and you may not be able to go back to get your pet(s).

Prepare a Pet Emergency Supply Kit.

Just as you do with your family's emergency supply kit, think first about the basics for survival, particularly food, water and medicine. Consider two kits. In one, put everything you and your pet(s) will need to stay where you are. The other should be a lightweight, smaller version you can take with you, if you and your pet(s) have to evacuate. Also remember to bring some extra cash in case your pet(s) need emergency veterinary care.

- **Food.** Keep at least three days of food in an airtight, waterproof container. Bring a manual can opener, if needed. Include a feeding schedule, too.
- **Water.** Store at least three days of water specifically for your pet(s), in addition to water you need for yourself and your family.
- **Medicine and medical records.** In a waterproof container store an extra supply of medicines your pet(s) take on a regular basis. Include a schedule for your pet's medicine, as well as any behavioral problems associated with your pet(s) and the name and number of your veterinarian.
- **First Aid Kit.** Talk to your veterinarian about what is most appropriate for your pet's emergency medical needs. Most kits should include cotton bandage rolls, bandage tape and scissors; antibiotic ointment; flea and tick prevention; latex gloves; isopropyl alcohol and saline solution. Consider including a pet first aid reference book, too.
- **Collar with ID tag and leashes.** Your pet should wear a collar with up-to-date identification tags attached, at all times. Include a backup leash, collar and ID tag in your pet's emergency supply kit. In addition, place copies of your pet's registration information, vaccination documents and medical records, and the name and phone number of a relative or friend that is outside of the disaster area in a waterproof container. You should also talk with your veterinarian about permanent identification such as implanting your pet(s) with a microchip, and enrolling your pet in a recovery database. **IMPORTANT!** Please make sure that you actually register your pet after the microchip has been implanted. Some Veterinarians and Animal Shelter's and Breeder's **DO NOT** do it for you! It is very easy to go online to register the microchip or mail in the form (you should make a point of updating your information whenever there is a change).
- **Crate or other pet carrier.** If you need to evacuate in an emergency, the emergency shelter on Martha's Vineyard will welcome you and your pet(s). Your and your pet(s) will be in separate locations, but inside the same shelter. M.V. Disaster Animal Response Team and the Red Cross will shelter your pet(s). Dog owners should have a crate large enough for your dog to be able to stand; turn around and lie down in comfortably. Cat owners should have a crate large enough to put your cat in it with a carrier (as a hidey hole) and a litter box and bowls.
- **Sanitation.** Include pet litter and litter box, newspapers, paper towels, plastic trash bags and household bleach to provide for your pet's sanitation needs. You can use bleach as a disinfectant (dilute 9 parts water to 1 part bleach). Do not use scented or color safe bleaches, or those with added cleaners.
- **A photograph of you and your pet(s) together.** If you become separated from your pet(s) during an emergency, a photograph of you and your pet(s) will help you document ownership and allow others to assist you in identifying your pet(s). Include detailed information about species, breed, age, sex, color, and any distinguishing marks or characteristics.
- **Familiar items.** Put favorite toys, treats, bedding in your kit. Familiar items can help reduce stress for your pet.

Plan what you will do in an Emergency.

Be prepared to assess the situation. Use whatever you have on hand to take care of yourself and ensure your pet's safety during an emergency. Depending on your circumstances and the nature of the emergency, the first important decision is whether you stay put or get away. You should understand and plan for both possibilities. Use common sense and the information you are learning here to determine if there is immediate danger.

In any emergency, local authorities may or may not be able to provide information immediately on what is happening and what you should do. However, watch TV, listen to the radio and check the internet for instructions. If you're specifically told to evacuate; shelter-in-place or seek medical treatment, do so immediately.

- **Create a plan to get away.** Plan how you will assemble your pet(s) and anticipate where you will go. If you must evacuate, take your pet(s) with you. A shelter opened on Martha's Vineyard that will welcome you and your pet(s). You and your pet(s) will be housed in separate areas of the emergency shelter. You will be asked to feed, walk and visit with your pet(s). You should also consider staying with family or friends who are willing to take in you and your pet(s) in an emergency. Other options may include: a hotel or motel that takes pets or a boarding facility, such as a kennel or veterinary hospital that is near an evacuation facility or your family's meeting place. Find out before an emergency happens if any of these facilities in your area might be viable options for you and your pet(s).
- **Develop a buddy system.** Plan with neighbors, friends or relatives to make sure that someone is available to care for or evacuate your pet(s) if you are unable to do so. Talk with your pet care buddy about your evacuation plans and show your pet care buddy where you keep your pet's emergency supply kit. Also designate specific locations, one in your immediate neighborhood and another far away, where you can meet in an emergency.
- **Talk to your pet's veterinarian about emergency planning.** Discuss the types of things that you should include in your pet's emergency first aid kit. You should also consider permanent identification such as a microchip implanted into your pet(s) and enrolling your pet(s) in a recovery database. If your pet(s) are micro-chipped, keeping your emergency contact information up-to-date and listed with a reliable recovery database is essential to your being reunited with your pet.

Stay informed and know about the types of Emergencies.

Some of the things you can do to prepare for the unexpected, such as assembling an emergency supply kit for yourself, your family and your pets, is the same regardless of the type of emergency. However, it's important to stay informed about what might happen and know what types of emergencies are likely to affect your region, as well as emergency plans that have been established by your state and local government. For more information about how to prepare, visit www.ready.gov or call 1-800-BE-READY (237-3239).

Be prepared to adapt this information to your personal circumstances and make every effort to follow instructions received from authorities on the scene. With these simple preparations, you can be ready for the unexpected. Those who take the time to prepare themselves and their pets will likely encounter less difficulty, stress and worry. Take the time now to get yourself and your pet ready.

PREPARING FOR THE UNEXPECTED MAKES SENSE. GET READY NOW!