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KEEP YOUR PET SAFE DURING A DISASTER

Planning Ahead Could Save Your Pet's Life

Huntington, CT, (September 26, 2005) – The devastating hurricane Katrina is graphic evidence of just how disruptive natural disasters can be. People affected are without electricity, water, clothing, phone and even shelter. No matter where you live in the United States, you are vulnerable to some sort of natural disaster such as a blizzard, flood, hurricane, or in a post 9/11 world ... terrorist attacks.

“Like millions of Americans, our thoughts are with the survivors of hurricanes Katrina and Rita,” said Mary Ellen Walsh, owner of the Grateful Dog LLC and champion American Kennel Club breeder. “In the wake of this tragedy, people are seeing how disasters affect families and their pets. I’m sure many are asking themselves: *What would happen to my pet if a disaster happened here?*”

A Safe Place for Your Pet

Pets are NOT allowed inside emergency shelters for humans due to public health and safety reasons. It may be difficult, if not impossible, to find shelter for your animals in the midst of a disaster, so plan ahead. Do not wait until disaster strikes to do your research.

- Contact hotels and motels outside your immediate area to check policies on accepting pets and restrictions on number, size, and species. Ask if "no pet" policies could be waived in an emergency. Keep a list of "pet friendly" places, including phone numbers, with other disaster information and supplies. If you have notice of an impending disaster, call ahead for reservations.
- Ask friends, relatives, or others outside the affected area whether they could shelter your animals. If you have more than one pet, they may be more comfortable if kept together, but be prepared to house them separately.
- Prepare a list of boarding facilities and veterinarians who could shelter animals in an emergency; include 24-hour phone numbers.

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- Start a buddy system with someone in your neighborhood to check on your animals during disaster in case you are away from home. Keep an updated list of their home, work, and cell phone numbers (update every six months). Exchange information on veterinarians and have a permission slip put in your file at the vets, authorizing your buddy to get necessary emergency treatment for your pet in case you can't be reached.

Be Prepared with a Disaster Plan

“Evacuating your pets during a disaster is one of the most important things you can do to protect them. Leaving pets behind, even if you try to create a safe place for them, is likely to result in their being injured, lost, or killed,” said Ms. Walsh, who also trains dogs for North Star Foundation to help autistic children. “A calm, well-trained animal, who is either on a leash or in a carrier, will be more welcome wherever you go.”

The Grateful Dog recommends other ways to be prepared when disaster strikes.

- **Photos:** Take several pictures of all your pets, and be sure to photograph any distinguishing marks. These photos can help reunite you with a lost pet. Store the pictures in a re-sealable plastic bag in case you have to post them during rainy months.
- **Food:** Have a two week minimum supply of pet food and water on hand at all times. Store the dry food in air tight, waterproof containers. If you use canned food, buy the flip top cans or have a can opener in your airtight disaster supply container. Keep some of your pet's favorite treats on hand - they get stressed, too, and a treat provides them some comfort.
- **Identification:** Put a collar and tag (with address and phone number) on your pets. This will increase your chances of reuniting you with your pets if they escape.
- **Traveling:** If your dog rides in the car, always have a leash in the vehicle to be able to keep your dog safely controlled, if you have to leave your car. A disaster may occur while you are away from home.
- **Medication:** Always keep a back-up supply of your pets' medications. Prepare to ice down medications that need to be refrigerated. Keep a copy of your pet's medical records and current vaccination history. A vet may not be open for some time following a disaster.
- **Pet Disaster Kit** - Whether you are away from home for a day or a week, you will need essential supplies. Keep items in an accessible place and store them in sturdy, easily carried containers.

The Grateful Dog LLC provides private, in-home dog training using non-threatening, non-intimidating methods. For over 25 years, owner Mary Ellen Walsh has taught pet owners how to understand canine behavior and successfully train their dog using her “think like your dog” positive training philosophy. Serving the Fairfield and Westchester County areas, The Grateful Dog also offers community seminars and group training classes on obedience, behavior improvements, and puppy socialization – each focused on communicating with your dog through the power of positive reinforcement. As a certified Association Pet Dog Trainer, Ms. Walsh advises various dog organizations, such as Guiding Dogs for the Blind, and offers private phone consultations nationwide by appointment. For more information, visit www.thegratefuldogllc.com