

Disaster Planning for your Pets

As we prepare for hurricane season, which runs June 1 to Nov. 30, don't forget to plan for your pet. Their safety depends on you.

Keep your pet(s) safe by creating a disaster preparedness plan now. That can help make sure you won't have to leave your pet behind, and assure you never have to use your pet as an excuse **NOT** to evacuate. Prepare today.

What should I do to keep my pets safe?

First and foremost on the list: gather information.

If you plan to leave the area, call hotels and motels along your expected evacuation route to check if they accept pets. Ask about restrictions, such as pet size, breed and number of pets. Keep a list of pet-friendly locations, along with contact information. Note which locations require reservations, and make them early. Visit web sites like petswelcome.com that offer this information and more.

Consider creating a list of pet-sheltering kennels or veterinarian's offices outside the storm-affected area. Again, keep this contact information in a handy place and be sure to have a 24-hour telephone number to call, if needed.



Sheltering

If you opt to evacuate, consider sheltering with a friend or relative who lives outside the direct path of the storm, outside any flood zone, and does not reside in a mobile home or recreational vehicle. Make advance arrangements to avoid surprises and confusion.

If you choose to shelter at a Sarasota County Government-operated evacuation center, know that these sites accept domestic cats and dogs but require you to bring the following:

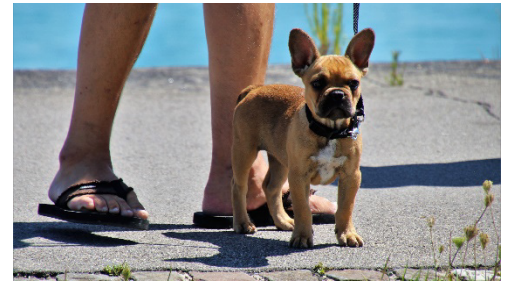
- Crate/carrier large enough for your pet to stand up and move around and, if needed, to fit a litter box
- Pet collar with identification, and rabies and license tags
- Current vaccination paperwork
- Leash
- Food and water supply for at least two weeks
- Food and water bowls
- A manual can opener
- Cat litter, scoop and plastic trash bags for handling waste
- Pee pads
- Toys, favorite blanket and treats
- Medications and specific care instructions
- Towels and first-aid supplies
- Photo of you and your pet together
- Consider micro-chipping your pet



After the storm

Exercise caution after the storm has passed. A variety of dangers likely will remain, and familiar scents and landmarks might also have changed, which could confuse your pet.

Never let your pet wander free outside in the storm's direct aftermath, as they might encounter harmful insects, other animals searching for higher ground, or other hazards, like downed power lines.



Prepare Now

Take the time to research the options that work best for your situation. Contact your local animal control office, the SPCA or Humane Society, or your veterinarian for more information.

And, again, never use your pet as an excuse **NOT** to evacuate.

Now is the time to prepare to stay safe... for you **and** your pets.



For more information, contact UF/IFAS Extension Sarasota County by phone at 941-861-5000 or email to sarasota@ifas.ufl.edu.

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