

Animals and Disasters

OVERVIEW

In 2007, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association,¹ there were over 72 million dogs and nearly 82 million cats in the United States. Almost 70% of households own at least one dog or cat, and nearly half of all U.S. households consider their pets to be family members. The needs of pets, along with their owners, must be addressed when preparing for and responding to disasters.

A 2008 survey conducted by the American Humane Association found that 47% of respondents would refuse rescue assistance if they had to abandon their pets.² During Hurricane Katrina, rescuers learned that many people are unwilling to evacuate if they are uncertain of their pet's safety. A Fritz Institute study found that 44% of people who did not evacuate during Hurricane Katrina at least in part did not want to leave their pets behind.³ People who choose to [evacuate](#) with pets require more time and preparation.



New Orleans, LA (2005): Evacuees and pets arrive at New Orleans airport where a pet-friendly shelter has been set up. Photo by Michael Rieger/FEMA

The 2006 Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act (PETS Act), requires governments to consider the needs of animals, including livestock, in their disaster plan.

Related Topics:

[Sheltering](#)

[Evacuation](#)

[Emergency Kits](#)

Reducing Vulnerability to Disasters

Prior to the Storm

There are several proactive measures pet owners and communities can take to facilitate animal owners during an emergency.

As a pet owner:

- Assemble an [emergency pet kit](#). The kit should include written instructions of the pet's regular feeding, medication, needs schedule, medical records, a picture of you and your pet, leash and collar, rabies tag, carrier, and a minimum 3-5 supply of food and water in waterproof containers.

¹ "2007 Pet Ownership and Demographics Sourcebook." American Veterinary Medical Association: 2007.

² "Nearly Half of Americans Won't Flee Without Fido" 5 Sep 2008. PR Newswire.

<http://www.duedee.com/news/239205/Nearly-Half-of-Americans-Wont-Flee-Without-Fido/>

³ http://www.ready.gov/america/_downloads/toolkit_pets/FEMAPetShelteringbestpractices2007.pdf

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES – PROMISING PRACTICES

- Prepare a plan. Pet owners may first want to consider family and friends who will welcome them and their animals. Shelters and hotels should be used a last resort.¹
- Seek out pet-friendly sheltering by searching the Internet (petswelcome.com; dogfriendly.com); staying tuned to the media for local information; and calling area shelters ahead of time. Livestock or exotic animals may need to be transported out of the area.
- Have the emergency pet kit easily accessible with fresh food that is no more than two months old.
- Make sure each animal is identifiable: This may be in form of a tag, microchip, or tattoo.
 - Shelters are more likely to accept pets if they have updated records.
 - Consider putting a non-local telephone number of a family member or friend on the pet's tag, as the phone system may be unreliable in the disaster's aftermath. Also, a picture of the pet owner with his or her pet should be kept on hand in case the pet becomes separated.



New Orleans, LA (2005): Evacuees with their pets arrive at New Orleans airport where a pet-friendly shelter has been set up. Photo by Michael Rieger/FEMA

As a community:

- Make a written plan. Animal caretakers and animal shelter managers should be involved in the planning process.

Create an Animal Disaster Preparedness Committee.⁴ This should include veterinarians and the management team leaders who will care for animals during an emergency.

Assess the vulnerability of the community to disasters and develop strategies to reduce vulnerability, including the risks to pets and pet owners during a disaster.

Develop a record keeping system prior to the disaster to keep track of pets during and after a disaster.

Build partnerships between emergency managers and nonprofit organizations such as ASPCA.

- Locate a place to [shelter](#) animals. A community may need several locations; fairgrounds, ranches, and boarding stables serve livestock and large animals well. Empty buildings, fairgrounds, barns, schools, buildings with fenced in-areas are best for domestic pets.²

⁴ "Disaster Planning: Developing a Community Disaster Plan for Animals." *The Humane Society of the United States*, 2000.

Place animal shelters in close proximity to human shelters so that evacuees can search for lost pets and have access to pets they board.

- Inform the community on where they can take their animals and what supplies they need to bring to the shelters. Work with media to distribute information.
- Attend a training program to learn about pet-friendly sheltering. There are a number of such programs, including one through [ASCPA](#).
- Stockpile needed supplies in a trailer for use during a disaster. This should include medical supplies to handle animal emergencies and pets with severe medical conditions.

Response and Sheltering

Sheltering animals can be stressful for people and animals. Even finding a shelter with capacity during a disaster, or a hotel that accepts pets, can be challenging and stressful. Ideally, a pet owner should stay with a family member or friend. However, this is not always possible.

- Provide pet-friendly sheltering to ensure the safety of residents and animals. There are a three general scenarios for pet sheltering:
 1. People and pets in same room – This is the easiest method to administer and pet owners retain the majority of animal care responsibilities. However, public awareness is imperative for success given pet allergies and other concerns.
 2. People and pets in same building – This is more labor intensive and will require animal caretakers on-site. A care system needs to be devised so that animals are ensured proper care. The number of visits made by owners can be tracked by animal caretakers or the caretakers may assume full responsibility for the animals.
 3. People and pets in separate buildings – This is the most laborious as animal caretakers must tend to animals preceding, during, and after the storm.
- Establish an intake/exit system.
Sign forms. An example of shelter forms from



Image Source: Dave Saville/FEMA



Gonzales, LA (2005): Many lost dogs from Hurricane Katrina were taken to the Lamarr Dixon Expo Center. Image Source: Liz Roll/FEMA



Galveston Island, TX (2008): Volunteer tends to pet in a pet shelter. Image Source: Jocelyn Augustino/FEMA

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES – PROMISING PRACTICES

Pinnellas County, Florida is shown in the appendix.

Hillsborough County, Florida and Marion County, Florida give pet owners a wristband and pets a collar that display matching identification numbers.

- Follow an assessment procedure for all entering animals. Determine if the animal can stay in the shelter or if it needs to go elsewhere for emergency care or quarantine. Be prepared to shelter animals with a variety of special needs and medical conditions, such as dialysis. Hillsborough County, Florida developed the following cage card system:³

Green cage card: The animal is very friendly in a shelter environment. Shelter staff may add water and walk as needed.

Yellow cage card: The animal may be frightened in a shelter environment. Only designated personnel are permitted to interact with these animals. Yellow cage cards are also issued if the pet's owner was uncertain of how the animal would act in a shelter environment.

Red cage card: The animal is known to be aggressive or fearful of strangers. Only designated personnel are permitted to interact with these animals.

- Reduce animal anxiety.
Provide separate areas for different species. Dogs should be kept with dogs and cats with cats. Caretakers may even want to separate large dogs from small dogs.

Minimize people walking through the shelter.

Cover the cage with a blanket, except in hot conditions.

- Keep detailed records and Cage Cards. Thorough records will allow owners to quickly and easily reunite with their pets after the storm. Assign each animal a tracking number, and take a picture (Polaroid or digital) of each animal. Record any special needs, and note any outstanding characteristics such as scars or eye color.

If the animal does not have a known owner, record when and where the animal was found.

Place the photos in a book and on-line, so that owners of lost pets can scan these instead of walking the shelter.⁴

Display the records and picture on the cage.

- Develop a schedule for feeding and care. In Louisiana, officials noticed a substantial improvement in animal behavior once they enacted a schedule. This practice is detailed in the LSU Experience promising practice.



Hackberry, LA (2005): Rescued cattle at temporarily sheltered in the high schools' rodeo pens. Image Source: Win Henderson/FEMA

Recovery

The most important aspect of recovery is reuniting pets with their owners. Hopefully, a detailed record system will facilitate a smooth process. Animal caretakers should continue to monitor the animals and plan to care for them in the days after the disaster.

- Monitor the health of pets. A disaster may induce stress in the animals.
- In the aftermath of a disaster, pet owners may be unable to retake possession of their animals immediately. Some pet owners may have lost their homes, for example. Offer a grace period with continued day-to-day care.
- As a pet shelter, plan to take on additional animals after the storm.

PROFILES

Animal Shelter Operations in Parker Coliseum, Louisiana

Program:	Louisiana State University Emergency Animal Shelter (as applied during Hurricane Katrina)
Organization:	Louisiana State University
Keywords:	Animal Sheltering, off-site sheltering
Source:	Disaster Response Manual http://www.lsuemergencyanimalshelter.org/lstory.htm
Brief Summary:	Summarizes the experience of Louisiana State in managing animals during a disaster. This 189 page document provides several recommendations for the management and care of pets.

Summary

Initially, a plan must be prepared that identifies a location for the pet shelter, an animal management team, how to obtain supplies, and where supplies are being stockpiled. LSU recommends the following schedule:

1. Make a Written Plan
2. 7-10 days before: equipment, supplies, leadership team and other personnel on ready alert
3. 3-5 days before: mobilize equipment, supplies, personnel
4. 2 days before: establish command center

The LSU document also highlights their experience as an emergency animal shelter. Officials chose the AgCenter's Parker Coliseum in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. They housed different species in separate quarters and enacted a schedule to regulate pets. Operations manager Andrea Flores outlines the Animal Operations portion of the LSU Experience [here](#).

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES – PROMISING PRACTICES

- Cats were housed in cages in the hallways under the bleachers.
- Small- and medium- sized dogs were house in the arena.
- Large dogs, and multiple dogs from single households, were placed in the barn.
- Odd species (rabbits, ducks, pigs, etc.) were placed in the barn.
- Most birds were billeted out to volunteer rescue societies that were better at dealing with their specialized needs. A few were housed on-site.
- Brachycephalic dogs with breathing problems and obese dogs were housed in air-conditioned space.
- Aggressive animals were separated from the general population and were handled only by people with animal handling experience and pre-exposure rabies vaccination.
- Animals with health problems were assigned specific areas and a color coded card was placed on the kennel to distinguish them.
- Animals with major health problems were automatically separated sent to a mini-hospital (“Triage”) for evaluation. Assessed patients were either sent to LSU Veterinary School if their condition required a lot of care, remained in Triage for further management, or were relocated to an isolation area.
- Separate isolation areas were set up for rabies hold for animals that had bitten a staff member and for dogs and cats (separated) with infectious disease.

During the early operation of the shelter, the lights were on all day and night as new animals continued to arrive. This constant disturbance may have contributed to stress and aggression of the animals. LSU adopted the following schedule of activity to address this issue. Once this schedule was established, a definite change in animal behavior was noticed.

TIME	ACTIVITY
8am	Turn lights on
8am – 12pm	Water, feed, clean kennels, walk dogs, and medicate animals
12pm	Turn lights off
12 – 5pm	Transfer pets due to inappropriate kennel size, medical issues, inappropriate animal behavior towards care takers, etc.
5pm	Turn lights on
5 – 9pm	Clean kennels, water, and medicate animals
9pm	Lights out, shelter closed
9pm – 8am	Quiet time, only minimal supervision by medical personnel

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES – PROMISING PRACTICES

Pet theft was an issue. The adopted schedule assisted in personnel control by reducing access during the quiet times and at night. A perimeter fence was built around the barn, but construction was delayed by 2 weeks because of the shortage of contractors. Security must be addressed from the beginning.

Safety issues were also a major problem. The main areas of concern were in the electrical wiring and proper handling of the quarternary ammonium compounds used to disinfect the cages during the cleaning process. Protective clothing, strict adherence to the Material Safety and Data Sheets MSDSs, and delivery through an automatic in-line mixer helped to solve many of the issues.”

Daily operations ran more smoothly once the command system was set up. The barn and the arena were set up with each animal zone staffed as follows:

Area Manager: This person was ultimately responsible for the care of every animal in his/her zone. They assigned tasks to volunteers and served as the “go to” person in their zone. Ideally they should have worn a distinctive colored shirt for easy recognition, but this was not achieved. Incoming veterinary and lay volunteers were directed to them for assignment. They provided owners with information as well. Ideally this role was filled by a veterinarian or veterinary technician because there were usually several animals that needed medical attention in each zone. In all areas, it would have been ideal to have at least two people in this role, but there was not sufficient manpower to achieve this.

Information desk: This was set up in both the barn and the arena, but not in the cat area. This desk maintained all records and information on pets in their zone. Desk staff directed owners to their pets when they visited.

Medical Staff: Veterinarians and veterinarian technicians were assigned to treatment and diagnosis where necessary, vaccination, ecto- and endoparasite control, microchipping and handling aggressive animals.

Pet Friendly Sheltering: A Nearby Location

Program:	Pet Friendly Shelter: Marion County, Florida Marion County Animal Center, Jill Lancon
Organization:	(jill.lancon@marioncountyfl.org)
Keywords:	Pet friendly sheltering, procedural plan, registration agreement, purchase list, pet identification http://www.txsart.org/id19.html
Source:	http://www.ncagrgis.com/sheltering/files/Additional%20Resources/Sheltering%20Florida.pdf Jill Lancon
Brief Summary:	The operating procedures of Marion, County Florida are frequently cited for their success. They practice good communication (a 2-way radio communication is maintained between the human and animal shelters) and

have a reliable ID system (an ID band system).

Detailed Summary:

MARION COUNTY ANIMAL CENTER, OCALA, FLORIDA PET FRIENDLY SHELTER - PROCEDURAL PLAN

Purpose:

To provide a safe haven for pet owners and their domestic pets in the event a disaster strikes Marion County and a Red Cross shelter is open for evacuees.

Registration:

The registration table should be manned by 2 people and located at the entrance. There should be at least 4 Polaroid cameras and

film to photograph the animals upon entry. Each owner and his or her animal(s) wear a matching ID band at all times. Owners get a wristband and pets get a neckband. Shelter instructions and rules are given to each owner individually.

Animal housing area:

Rope off 4-6 areas for housing. Line the floor heavy gauge plastic before placing cages. Run a rubber runner down the center. Each housing area should have a place for paper towels, spray bottles, disinfectants, litter pans, water, food, etc. A least one animal care technician will man each housing area at all times.

Procedures - Check-in:

At check-in, each person signs the necessary forms and a Polaroid of the owner and pet is taken.

ID bands will be placed on the pet's neck and the owner's wrist. Signed releases and photographs will be placed in a clear pocket and attached to the carrier the animal will be placed in. Photo will be facing out so at all times the technician or officer will have a visible reference.

Clean up:

Once the animals have been returned to their owners, remove the cages and disinfect the area. Reload the trailer and roll up the plastic. Finally, mop the floors, wipe down the walls, and deodorize.

Source: Marion County

. Certification for Animal Response after a Disaster



Top: Hallway before it is transformed into an animal shelter; **Bottom:** Hallways is lined with plastic to help with clean-up. Photo Source: Marion County, FL

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Program: HSUS Disaster Animal Response Team

Organization: Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)

Keywords: Preparedness, community responders

Source: http://www.hsus.org/hsus_field/hsus_disaster_center/volunteer_for_the_hsus_disaster_animal_response_team.html
#The_HSUS_Disaster_Animal_Response_Team

Brief Summary: <http://www.ndart.org/>
This program provides those already trained in disaster response with additional training to rescue animals. The training is three days long and covers a variety of topics including emergency animal shelters and animal handling.

Additional Sources:

- Module B: A FEMA program to provide basic information to government officials about planning for the needs of animals. The materials are free and can be downloaded at the link.
 - <http://www.training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is11.asp>

Marion County, Florida Registration and Agreement for Pet Sheltering

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES – PROMISING PRACTICES

REGISTRATION AND AGREEMENT

I, The animal owner signed below request the emergency housing of the animal being evacuated because of a pending or occurring disaster. **I must be housed at this Red Cross shelter during my pets stay.** The animal owner hereby releases the person or entity who is receiving the animal from any and all liability regarding the care and housing of the animal during and following this emergency. The animal owner acknowledges that if emergency conditions pose a threat to the safety of the animal, additional relocation may be necessary, and this release is intended to extend to such relocation.

The animal owner acknowledges that the risk of injury or death to the animal during an emergency cannot be eliminated and agree to be responsible for any veterinary expenses which may be incurred in the treatment of their animal. It is also required that the owner or his/her agent take responsibility for the care, feeding and maintenance of their animal.

Check out is required when departing from the shelter.

Animal Owner Signature _____

WOULD YOU BE EVACUATING IF A PET FRIENDLY SHELTER WASN'T AVAILABLE? YES NO

Date _____

Animal Owner Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Home Phone _____

Cell Phone _____ Do you have your phone available now? _____

Emergency Contact Name (not in shelter) _____ Phone number (include area code) _____

Emergency Contact Person in shelter _____

(This person would provide care for your pets in the event an emergency would occur)

Name of Person in charge of animals care **(must be staying at the shelter)**

Name of animal	Color	Sex	Breed	Age
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

(Only animals crated together on one sheet)

DO NOT WRITE UNDER THIS LINE

OFFICIAL USE ONLY

ASSIGNED CAGE # _____

STAFF INITIALS _____

SIGNATURE BELOW INDICATES THAT THE OWNER OR GUARDIAN HAS CLEANED THEIR PETS CAGE, RECEIVED THEIR PET AND IS CHECKING OUT OF THE SHELTER.

DATE AND TIME CHECKED OUT _____ **STAFF INITIALS** _____

SIGNATURE _____

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES – PROMISING PRACTICES

Marion County Purchase List

Home Depot

<i>Item & SKU#</i>	<i>Qty.</i>	<i>Unit Price</i>	<i>Total Price</i>
Rubber-Maid Brute garbage can 44 gal. sku# A640-587	4	\$34.90	\$139.60
Brute garbage can dolly sku#D640-699	4	\$26.93	\$107.72
1000 Watt Twin Head Promotional Telescoping Worklight sku # 624616	3	\$39.00	\$117.00
Commercial Electric HD extention 12 gauge X 100ft sku#A528-927	4	\$32.91	\$131.64
Rubber-Maid 26-36qt Combo Mop bucket with wringer sku#A537-533	2	\$39.98	\$79.96
Rubber-Maid #24 cotton mop with 60" handle sku# U71228	2	\$11.99	\$23.98
Spontex Auto & Boat Sponge sku#52701	6	\$2.60	\$15.60
Apex Heavy Duty hose 100ft x 5/8" sku#A256-587	2	\$29.97	\$59.94
ZEP Pro-Spray Bottle 32oz. sku#255-852	24	\$3.97	\$95.28
KIDDE Fire Extinguisher 3A40BC sku#A547-476	2	\$19.97	\$39.94
Motorolla Talk About T5800 2 per pack sku#C132-556	2	\$89.00	\$178.00
Maglite 4D Cell with batteries sku#GS4DH06	4	\$22.96	\$91.84
Ever-Ready rechargeable sku#A456-420	2	\$12.48	\$24.96
KEEPER heavy duty ratchet tie-down strap 27'x2" sku#A641-846	2	\$12.97	\$25.94
KEEPER heavy duty ratchet tie-down strap 12'x2" sku#C789-370	2	\$15.96	\$31.92
Veralite Multi-use 6' folding table sku#A727-330	2	\$44.97	\$89.94
Indoor / Outdoor folding chair sku#A776-776	8	\$14.97	\$119.76

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES – PROMISING PRACTICES

Appendix: Shelter Registration Form for Pinellas County, Florida

PINELLAS COUNTY SHELTER REGISTRATION FORM

Incident / DR number & Name: _____

Shelter Name: _____

Please print all sections

Shelter City, County, State: _____

Family Name: (Last Name)		Total family members registered: _____ sheltered: _____
Pre-Disaster Address:	Post-Disaster Address (if different):	Identification verified by: (Record Document I.D. number and type)
City /State/Zip:	City/State/Zip:	Primary language:
Home phone:	Cell phone/Other: _____	If primary language is not English, does anyone speak English? (Who?)
Method of Transportation: If personal vehicle-plate #/State: (for security purposes only)		

INFORMATION ABOUT INDIVIDUAL FAMILY MEMBERS

Name: Last, First	Age	Gender (M/F)	Rm./Cot #	Arrival Date	Departure Date	Departing? Relocation address and phone

PET INFORMATION

PET'S NAME	Weight	Species (dog, cat)	Breed	Color	Age	License #

Family member responsible for care/treatments: _____

NOTE. Cages/crates must have secure doors and be large enough for the pet to stand and turn around. Plan to bring any medications and special foods. Other dog and cat food, litter and water will be available at the PFS.

Below information to be completed upon arrival at the PFS

Are there members of your family who currently need medical attention or are taking medication? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes -- who?	Referral to DHS: <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Are there other evacuated members of your family who are staying elsewhere? Please list contact information if known:	Referral to DMH: <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Special dietary needs:	
Special accommodations required:	
Housing needs are: <input type="checkbox"/> Permanent <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown at this time	Is Home insured? <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
How is family affected? <input type="checkbox"/> Home Damaged <input type="checkbox"/> Home Destroyed <input type="checkbox"/> Home Inaccessible	<input type="checkbox"/> Evacuated from area
Notes:	

***I have read / been read and understand the shelter rules and agree to abide by them.**

Family Member Signature (print and sign) _____ Date _____

Shelter Witness (print and sign) _____ Date _____

* If completed on line you will be required to sign the application upon arrival at the PFS.