



Victim Services of Waterloo Region

Animals and Disasters

pt. 2/2

During an Emergency

1. Bring your pets inside immediately. Pets can often sense an impending disaster before the people around them, and will often run away and hide. Bringing them in early can prevent this. NEVER leave your pet outside or tied up during a storm – they are unable to protect themselves, and need your assistance just like a human child would.
2. Put leashes and collars on, and have your animal(s) care package ready.
3. Separate cats and dogs, as anxiety caused by an emergency can make even the best of buddies act out. Keep small pets such as gerbils and rabbits away from cats and dogs as well.
4. Return any birds to their cages.
5. If you are evacuated and are able to bring your pets (do everything in your power to bring them with you!), use their pet carrier, cage or crate to transport them, if possible. For dogs, it may be easier to use their leash to escort them to your vehicle, but it is recommended that they are strapped into the car with a dog seatbelt – they will be more safe in an emergency, and will be unable to move around erratically if stressed, which can distract the driver. Covering their crate or carrier with a blanket may make your pet feel a bit more safe, as may giving them a favourite toy. If you are transporting a snake or iguana, place them in a pillowcase and hold the end really tight, they squirm! Remember to bring their food (keep live food secured!),

a water bowl for them to soak in later and their heat rock. Give lizards and birds fruit or veggies with a high water content, instead of transporting them with water.

6. Expect that your pet may not be acting normally. Pets sense danger, and are afraid just like people are. It is advisable to give your pet some physical space, while remaining close by at all times. Pets may bite out of fear, so take care to handle them as little as possible and to keep children separate from them.

If you cannot take your pet with you...

If you can take your pet with you, do so! Pets are not well equipped to survive during an emergency, and need our help! If you *absolutely must* leave a pet behind, remember to take some steps to help them be safe and secure until you are able to return for them.

Birds

Cage your bird, and take the cage into a washroom or otherwise safe room without windows. Cover their cage with a thin cloth or sheet to protect them, but let light in. Remember to use a regulatory food dispenser, and to have an adequate water source available. Close the door behind you.

Cats, Dogs and Small Animals

Take your pet into a safe room with a water source, such as a washroom – make sure that it is a room with a door, not an open

concept room. Bring in enough food to last three or more days (for dogs, try and get a food dispenser which will regulate food intake, as dogs aren't very good at regulating their own eating habits). Leave a water source that is accessible to them running (Don't just leave the toilet seat up! Many cats like to jump into the sink to drink, but the tub may be easier for a dog.), but remember to leave the drain unplugged or you will have flooding damage to worry about. Bring in some comfy bedding, their favourite tough toy (something durable enough to safely last a few days, like a Kong), and a litter box or newspapers, if applicable. Don't leave toiletries or bathroom cleaning products easily accessible – these can be poisonous! Close the door behind you. *Remember – separate your animals by species!*

In the Aftermath

1. If you are evacuated after an emergency, bring your pet. Just because the worst is over does not mean that there are not dangers present. Disease, water contamination, downed power lines, dangerous debris and an increase in dangerous snakes and animals in your area might occur after a disaster. Your pets understanding of the world around them is also dramatically altered, as the familiar smells and sounds are no longer the same.
2. In the days following an emergency, never let your pet go outside without supervision. Keep them on a short leash – this will allow you to keep them away from

from danger, and being close to you will make them feel more secure.

3. Keep an eye on their behaviour – watch for aggression and behaviour which is not usual for your pet. Keep their surroundings quiet, keep children at a distance and isolate them in a crate, room or safe yard with shelter and water if necessary (leash them if you must do this).
4. Pets get injured just as people do, and even small cuts can become infected, particularly in areas where disasters have occurred. Give your pet a thorough examination, and ensure that they receive medical attention if required. Remember to inform your veterinarian if you have pet medical insurance coverage!

Disasters seriously affect our lives, and pets are equally affected. While buildings can be repaired and schedules resumed, the physical and mental wellbeing of your pet is not as easy to fix. By taking precautions and having an emergency plan, you can work to ensure that you and your pet will recover from a disaster together. Family is an important part of your recovery and your pet is a beloved member of your family, so keep them safe and they will keep you great company for years to come.



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