

As Hurricane Season Starts, The Humane Society & Shelter – SouthCoast, Fall River Animal Control, and the Humane Society of the United States, Urge Americans to Include Pets in Plans

With The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and other forecasters predicting a fierce hurricane season this June to November, The Humane Society & Shelter-SouthCoast, Fall River Animal Control, and the Humane Society of the United States urge coastal residents to take some simple – but critical – steps to keep their pets safe and healthy in the event of disaster. More than 35 million people, many of them pet owners, live in areas threatened by Atlantic hurricanes.

With pets in more than 60 percent of American households, weathering a major storm requires an evacuation plan that includes pets. If it isn't safe for you, it isn't safe for them. If you are ordered to shelter-in-place (not evacuate), bring your pets inside with you. Make sure you have adequate supplies.

The HSUS Animal Rescue Team has seen a rapidly increasing number of calls for disaster animal rescue assistance during the past few years — rescuing more than 10,000 animals from natural and man-made disasters in 2009. Pet owners can reduce their animals' chances of being at risk during a disaster by following the suggestions below.

Things you can do right now:

- Put a collar with visible identification on your pets, including indoor-only pets.
- Keep pictures of your pets on hand for identification purposes.
- Create a pet emergency kit (see below) and refresh the items every few months.
- Talk to your neighbors about how they can help your pets if you are not at home when disaster strikes.
- Create a list of hotels that allow pets. Plan on evacuating about 100 miles inland.

Pet emergency kits should include:

- Three-or-more-day supply of food in airtight, waterproof containers, and drinking water.
- Bowls for food and water.
- Current photos and physical description of your pets, including details on markings.
- Medications, vaccination records and first aid pet supplies.
- Comfort items such as a toy and blanket.

- Small garbage bags.
- For dogs include: leash, harness and a sturdy carrier large enough to use as a sleeping area.
- For cats include: litter and litter box and a sturdy carrier large enough for transport and for your cat to use as a temporary "apartment" for several days.

A Zogby International poll after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast found that 61 percent of pet owners will not evacuate if they cannot bring their pets with them. In 2006, Congress addressed this issue by passing the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards (PETS) Act, which requires state and local emergency management agencies to make plans that take into account the needs of individuals with pets and service animals in the event of a major disaster or emergency. It is crucial that all pet owners reach out to their local government to understand their community's existing human and pet evacuation plans.

For more tips on preparedness plans that include your pets, visit humanesociety.org/prepare.