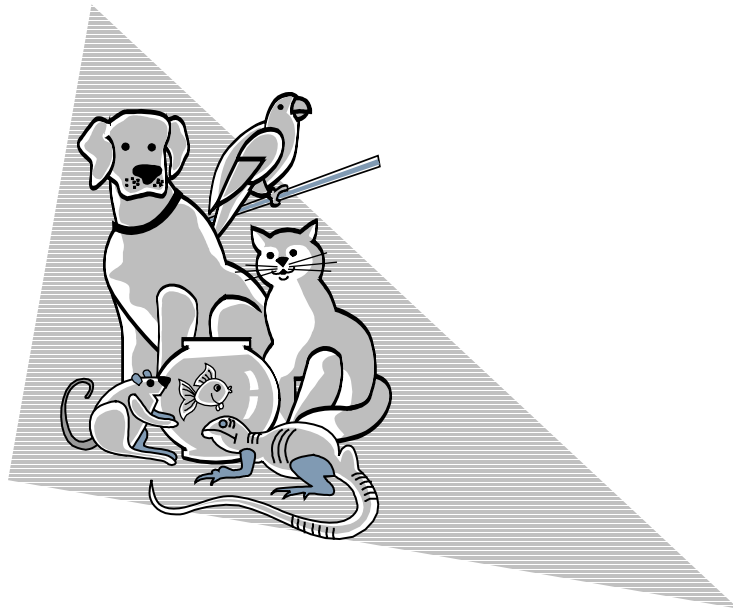




Tompkins County
Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Emergency Preparedness For Animals

~Small Animals~



*How to protect your dog, cat, bird, fish, rabbit,
reptile, or other small pet in an emergency*

A little preparation goes a long way towards reducing the impact of a disaster or emergency on you and your loved ones. It is especially important for pet owners to prepare since there are fewer public resources available to help animals following a disaster. Remember, you are responsible for your pets' safety and well-being—they depend on you.

The term “emergency” or “disaster” can encompass anything from a fire in your home to a severe snowstorm to a region-wide chemical hazard. While it is important to be aware of the most likely disasters in your area, a general plan is best.

An Ounce of Prevention

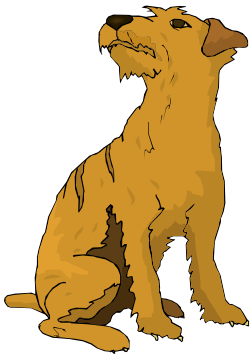
Look around your home and determine what you can do to prevent disasters from happening in the first place:

- Secure bookshelves to the wall.
- Keep a fire extinguisher in your home, and make sure it is up to date.
- Test smoke detectors on a regular basis.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors.
- If you have a backup power source, be sure it is in good working order.
- Any hazardous chemicals should be stored as safely as possible, away from people and animals.
- Keep in mind that home fires are one of the most common emergencies, and most of them start in the kitchen.



Make a Plan

The next step is to develop a family emergency plan for all human and animal members of the household. *It is vital to be prepared to take all your animals with you if you are forced to leave your house.* Leaving them behind reduces their chance of survival and is simply another disaster waiting to happen.



- Choose a friend or relative out of state as your emergency contact. (Following a regional disaster, it is often easier to phone out of state than in state). Be sure everyone in the family has their phone number and knows to check in with them as soon as possible following an emergency if you are separated. Consider putting their number on your pet's i.d. tag.
- Red Cross shelters do not allow animals, so plan to stay with friends or family members with your pets if you must evacuate. If you can't do this, decide where you will go. Remember that your pet is better off staying with you.
- Our shelter is often at capacity and focuses on ownerless animals, so will be unable to temporarily house your pet following a disaster.
- Make a list of the following important phone numbers: your veterinarian, the Tompkins County SPCA, several hotels/motels within 50 miles of your home, boarding kennels, your out of state contact, and animal poison control. Program them into your cell phone and keep a printed version in your emergency kit.
- Put together an emergency kit with supplies for all humans and animals in the home.

Make a Plan, Cont'd.

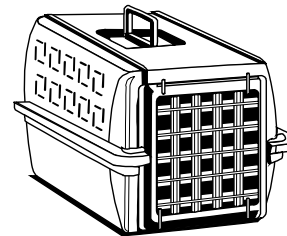
- Set up a “buddy system” with a friend, family member, or neighbor to help your pet if you are away when a disaster strikes. Make sure they have keys to your house, instructions on where to go, and are familiar with your animals.
- Learn your pets’ favorite hiding places.
- If you ever board your pet at a boarding kennel or with a petsitter, be sure you know their emergency response plans.
- Decide where your family will meet if you get separated.
- Have a transport cage/carrier ready for each pet. Keep them as accessible as possible, and train your pets to be comfortable in them.

Emergency Kit for Animals

Put together at least one emergency kit with provisions for all family members, including pet(s). Consider keeping one at home (in case you are confined there) and one in the car in case you have to evacuate quickly. Kits should be easy to carry: use backpacks, duffle bags, or buckets with a lid and handle.

Your kit should contain at least the following items for your pet

- Water* (one week supply)
- Dry and wet food (one week supply)*
- Can opener
- Prescription medications*
- Plastic bowls for food and water, or a drip-bottle if your pet is used to drinking out of these instead of bowls
- Plastic bags and paper towels
- Current photo of pet(s) and any proof of ownership, as well as vaccination records (current vaccinations will be required by most boarding facilities)
- Plastic container (litterbox) and kitty litter
- Muzzle
- Temporary i.d. tags and extra collars/harnesses
- Pet comfort items—blankets, towels, toys, treats
- Heat source for birds or reptiles
- Your list of important phone numbers



Organizations listed under Resources on the back page can provide descriptions of what your basic emergency kit should contain. In addition to food and water, don't forget:

- Flashlights
- Batteries*
- Solar or battery powered radio

**Use up and replace on a regular basis so they stay fresh*

Preparing Your Pets

- One of the best things you can do to ensure your pet's safety is to keep identification on him or her at all times. Visible i.d. is the best. For dogs and cats that means a collar with a tag that has your phone number(s). Rabbits and ferrets can wear a harness with a tag. Microchips can be helpful, but not everyone has a scanner and scanners do not always read the chip, so they are best used as a supplement to visible identification. Rabbits, dogs, and cats can also be tattooed, and birds can be banded. Also place identification (your name and phone number) on all pet carriers and cages *before* a disaster.



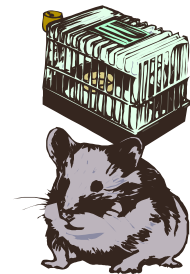
- Train your pets—obedience can make a big difference in an emergency situation. Dogs and cats (birds, rabbits, and ferrets if possible) should come when their name is called and when they hear dry food or treats rattled. Each mealtime, shake a container of treats or dry food, call your pet's name and whistle. Eventually they will associate the sounds you make with food, and will come when called.
 - All pets should learn to be comfortable in their cage or transport carrier. Dogs should be comfortable wearing a collar/harness, leash, and muzzle if necessary. These behaviors are easily taught using positive reinforcement through the use of food treats.
- Place signs in windows or doors letting firefighters and other emergency personnel know how many pets are inside and what type(s) of animal they are.
 - Practice putting your pets into their carriers and loading them and your emergency kits into the car. Practice until you can evacuate in just a few minutes. Give your pet treats after each drill.

During the Disaster

- Stay calm. Your pets react to your emotions and actions.
- If there is a possibility of an evacuation order, leave right away. It is always better to be safe than sorry, and evacuation takes longer than you might imagine.
- Cover pet carriers with thin blankets or towels. The dark and quiet will help keep pets calm.

After the Disaster

- Try to return to your pet's normal routine as quickly as possible.
- Pets may wish to stay near you more than usual—allow them to do so.
- Let pets sleep as much as they want as they recover from the stress.
- Keep a close eye on pets for signs of illness. Birds, rodents and reptiles can be particularly susceptible to respiratory illnesses following a stressful event.
- If you notice behavioral changes that do not improve over a few days, contact the Tompkins County SPCA, your veterinarian, or a professional behaviorist for advice.



If Your Pet is Lost in a Disaster

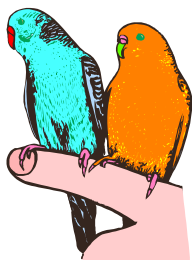
- Check at the TCSPCA daily.
- Post “lost pet” flyers in at least a one-mile radius.
- Talk to neighbors and give them a flyer in person. Ask them to look in their yard, shed, garage, and basement.
- Leave out food and water on your front or back porch.
- Drive and walk around calling your pet’s name and shaking treats or a container of dry food. Dusk is an especially good time to try. Lost pets are usually fairly near home, so this is an extremely important technique.
- Leave something familiar to your pet on your front and back porch—a toy, their bed, a t-shirt that smells like you.
- Do not give up hope. Keep looking. Once the trauma of the event has passed, your pet may very well come home.



Special Consideration for Specific Disasters

- **Wildfire.** Fire can spread quickly and unpredictably. If there is a wildfire in your area, immediately get ready to leave. If a voluntary evacuation notice is given, or if conditions appear to be unsafe, do not delay—leave. Also, even if you are not evacuated, soot, ash, and smoke can affect you and your animals. Air filters can make an enormous difference.
- **Flood.** If you live in an area at risk for flooding, keep sandbags and plastic sheeting on hand. Have several alternate evacuation routes planned.
- **Severe winter storms** (snowstorm, ice storm, blizzard). Companion animals should *always* be allowed indoors, but especially during severe weather, they should be brought inside until the weather improves. If your pets are outdoors in winter weather, be sure they have insulated shelter. Straw and dry blankets can offer additional warmth. (Wet or damp blankets can dangerously chill animals). Pets need extra food and water in cold conditions.

Special Considerations for Specific Animals



- **Birds.** Since birds are especially susceptible to smoke and chemicals, consider purchasing air filters. Aviaries should have overhead sprinkler systems installed. If you have large numbers of birds, be sure you have enough carriers or detachable, closeable nest boxes for all.
- **Reptiles/Amphibians.** Lidded plastic containers (with holes poked in the top for air) can serve to transport and temporarily house them. Do not mix species. For species who need dampness, use wet paper towels. For those who live in water, fill the container 1/3 full of the water the animal was living in. Remember to bring a portable heat source for animals who need it.

Resources

Tompkins County SPCA
(607) 257-1822 • www.spcaonline.com

A Guide to Citizen Preparedness (including animals)
(800) 480-2520 • <http://www.fema.gov/areyouready/>

New York State Emergency Management Office
(518) 457-2200 • <http://www.nysemo.state.ny.us/>

Animal Poison Hotline (\$35 charge)
(888) 232-8870 • <http://www.animalpoisonhotline.com/>

AVMA Disaster Preparedness Series
(847) 925-8070 ext.6632 •
<http://www.avma.org/disaster/default.asp>

American Red Cross
(607) 273-1900 • <http://www.tompkins-redcross.org>

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