

Disaster Preparation for Your Sugarcat !

We've gotten a lot of great input from our Monday night Sugarcat Chat at Gorb's place. To quote Pauline and Wee Felice, "it is rather amazing all the things we reach for daily and never think about". Hopefully, the following information will help you evaluate your needs and set up your own plan.

There are 3 main considerations in planning for the care of your Sugarcat or any other companion animal during a disaster.

1. What type of 'disaster' you are likely to face?
2. Are you at home or away from home when it occurs?
3. Will you shelter in place or evacuate?

The first thing you need is a plan, and the answers to the above 3 questions will guide you in formulating that plan.

What does the type of disaster have to do with how I prepare?

There are many types of situations where your pet may need emergency care. Some that immediately come to mind are the natural disasters like fires, tornados, hurricanes, blizzards, floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, etc. No part of the country is completely immune. We also need to consider the 'man-made' type of situation...power outages, car accidents, terrorism attacks and the like.

Each one may require a different plan and / or emergency kit. If you live in the colder regions, you may need alternate heating sources for warmth like blankets, down throws, etc., likewise, the warmer climates may require coolers for insulin, Epogen and other medications.

What if I'm not home when disaster strikes?

If you are not home, and cannot return to care for your pets, you should have an agreement with a neighbor or someone else who has access to your home, knows where your emergency kit /supplies are kept, and will get your animals out and care for them if necessary.

There should be a sign on your door alerting the Police or the Fire Department that there are pets inside, particularly one that needs medical care. For multiple cat owners, there should be some way for emergency personnel to identify the special needs kitty...a picture, description, or identification tags on their collars. There should also be information outlining all that needs to be done for your special needs kitty including feeding times, shots, etc.

What difference does it make where I shelter?

If you shelter at home, your kitty's needs should all be in one place...food, water, bowls, diabetic supplies, etc. so you don't have to assemble them. Carriers and transportation are not as big an issue.

If you must evacuate your home, kitty's supplies should be in an easily transported box/bag near their carriers. For those with multi-pet households, you must be able to transport all the pets/carriers in your vehicle. Bungee cords are good to keep carriers/cages in place.

OK, so what needs to be in this Plan?

If you need to evacuate to a shelter, keep in mind that most human emergency shelters do not accept any pets other than service animals, such as seeing eye dogs. Make sure you have family or friends out of the area who are willing to care for your pets if you cannot take them with you. Another option may be your vet, local boarding kennels, or animal shelters.

If you plan on staying at a motel/hotel, make sure they take pets. Some make exceptions in emergency situations, but most do not. Be prepared to pay a pet deposit and an extra \$5 to \$10 a night. Lots of Days Inns, Best Westerns, Red Roof Inns and Motel 6 allow pets, but it is a good idea to call ahead to make sure.

Last, and perhaps what we least want to think about...provisions should be made for your pets in your will.

Now I have a plan, what do I need in my emergency supply kit for my kitty?

Let's consider the basics:

- Food (and for those that still need them, can openers), may want to consider packing dry food for those hot days when food spoils quickly
- Bottled Water
- Bowls
- Litter & litter box (can be disposable)
- Bedding
- Toys - Catnip
- Leashes and harnesses / collars with tags
- Carriers
- Pet first aid kit – including any current medications / supplements
- Medical records containing most recent blood work/urinalysis – kept in a waterproof plastic bag
- Blankets in cold weather

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- Ice Chest for giving kitty cool drinks in the heat...keep milk jugs of water in your freezer...keeps the ice chest cool and when they melt, you have extra water
- Rescue Remedy
- Radio and batteries so you will know when you can go home again

For the diabetic:

- BG records, notes on dosage and feeding times in case you are not available – keep these in a waterproof plastic bag
- BG test kit with meter, strips, lancets, lancet device if used, tissues or cotton pads
- Insulin and a good cooler with ice packs
- Syringes
- Needle clipper and/or a sharps container of some type to dispose of used syringes
- Medications / supplements taken on a regular basis...Vit. E, B-12, etc.
- Urine test strips to check for ketones
- Pedialyte for dehydration
- Feeding syringes
- Baby food or tuna to tempt kitties who aren't eating the tuna juice is good to add to their water to coax them to drink
- Sub-Q Fluids if ketones develop and you can't get to a vet
- Corn syrup, little packages of maple syrup or honey for hypos (raid your local fast food establishments)
- High carbohydrate food or treats for hypos
- Tags indicating they are diabetic – with contact information
- A light source such as flashlights, chem. lights...that light when you break them, or lanterns. Keep in mind open flames can be dangerous to kitty tails!

For the CRF kitty:

- Fluids – bag(s) of lactated ringers and vented IV sets
- Bottled distilled water
- Medications / supplements taken on a regular basis

How much food, water, etc. do I need to keep in my emergency kit?

This really depends upon the type of disaster you are likely to face. In emergencies like 9-11, floods, hurricanes, etc. you may not be able to return to your house for extended periods of time, and will likely require more supplies than a simple power outage or snow storm that lasts a day or two. Even if you do not have to evacuate, you may not be able to get out of your house.

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- Disaster sites recommend at least 3 days of supplies
- A minimum of 1 week is a good starting point
- Our experienced hurricane survivor keeps 2 weeks of supplies on hand

Remember, it is better to have too much than not enough!

So, how and where do I store all this stuff?

Whatever storage container you choose, it should be easily transportable and located in an easily accessible area.

Suggestions for storage containers:

- Big plastic tubs with lids – have the benefit of being waterproof
- Duffel bags
- Wheeled backpacks
- Baskets

Money / space is tight, how can I cut back?

- If you don't have enough carriers for each, you may be able to double up, this also saves on transport space
- If you don't have a carrier, improvise...a pillow case will do in a pinch, although not for any type of longer term confinement...2 laundry baskets, one upside down on top of the other and tied together with cable ties is also a good substitute
- Check with your local shelters, they often have used carriers they are willing to sell for \$5 to \$10
- You don't need to keep a second set of all your supplies. Keep the things you use daily together in a box/basket. Keep your emergency supplies together in a different box/basket. That way, you can just grab your daily basket and add it to the emergency supplies.

Where can I get more information?

Web Sites

<http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/animalsafety.html>

http://www.furr-angles.com/disaster_preparedness.htm

<http://www.asPCA.org/site/PageServer?pagename=emergency>

Articles:

Is Your Cat Safe? Cat Fancy, September 2003

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