



The Ultimate ➤ Pet Preparedness ➤ Toolkit

Protect your pets with expert tips, safety checklists and disaster plans.

American Humane Society

Protecting animals. Preparing communities. Saving lives.

Disasters can strike at any time, leaving pets, families and communities vulnerable. From hurricanes and wildfires to floods and tornados, American Humane Society has seen firsthand how preparation saves lives.

That's why we created this toolkit: to help you take simple, proactive steps to help keep your beloved animals safe before, during and after an emergency.

As the nation's leading voice for animal protection, American Humane Society is proud to share over a century of lifesaving knowledge and experience with you. We've deployed to some of the most devastating emergencies in recent history, and we want to help you be ready when the unthinkable happens.

Every member of the family deserves protection, especially the ones who cannot speak for themselves.

Quick Start Guide

Essential Actions Today

Take these 5 critical steps right now!

1



Microchip & ID Tags

Ensure pets have current identification

2



Create an Emergency Kit

Gather 7–10 days of pet supplies

3



Plan Evacuation Routes

Know multiple safe destinations

4



Assign Family Roles

Designate who handles each pet

5



Practice Your Plan

Run through scenarios with your pets



☆ Pet ID Tags & Microchips ☆

What Every Pet Owner Should Know

ID That Saves Lives

The following are common types of identification that can mean the difference between life and death for your best friend(s). Remember, with each of these methods, it is imperative to keep information up to date.

ID TAGS

All cats and dogs need to wear collars with ID tags, rabies vaccination tags and city or county licenses (where applicable). The ID tag should include the owner's name, current address, telephone numbers (day and evening) and the pet's name.

Here are some other tips:

- ✓ If you are traveling, put a temporary tag on your pet with the contact information of someone who knows how to reach you.
- ✓ For cats, use a specially made safety collar that has a short piece of elastic sewn in it. These collars allow the cat to escape if it gets caught on window blinds, furniture, fencing or other objects.
- ✓ Tag your cat even if you never let him outside. He could slip through an open door and quickly become lost in the neighborhood.



MICROCHIPS

American Humane Society encourages all pet owners to **take the added security precaution of having their pets microchipped**. Microchipping serves as a permanent identification system that will always be with your pet. Nearly all animal shelters across the country routinely scan every animal upon intake for the presence of a microchip. Most veterinary clinics also have microchip scanners.

How do microchips work?

Each chip contains a unique ID number that can be read by a microchip scanner and matched with owner information in a comprehensive database. A microchip is effective in reuniting a lost pet with its owner only when the owner's contact information in the microchip database is accurate. Therefore, it is imperative that you immediately register your pet's microchip with the appropriate database and always update your contact information promptly when you move or get a new phone number.

Are microchips safe?

Rare complications following microchip implantation have been reported, such as migration, inflammation, infection, abscess formation and tumor formation. However, American Humane Society agrees with the American Veterinary Medical Association's (AVMA) assertion that "... the risk that your animal will develop cancer due to its microchip is very, very low and is far outweighed by the improved likelihood that you will get your animal back if it becomes lost.



! An ID tag or microchip can be the difference between lost and found. Take a few minutes to update your pet's info and give them the best chance to get home safely.

Wildfire Safety for Pets

Act Fast, Stay Safe

Wildfires can erupt and spread in a matter of minutes, giving families little time to react. In fire-prone regions, preparation can mean the difference between safety and tragedy. This article focuses on wildfire-specific tips to help you protect your pets if smoke, ash or flames threaten your home.

Steps to Take Now

- Microchip pets or put a tag on their collar with your name, address and cell phone number so they may be returned quickly in case you are separated from your pets. Be sure that any microchip information is up to date.
- Have a plan already established on which family member is responsible for your pet's needs.
- Portable carriers should be ready to go at a moment's notice. Practice loading cats and dogs into pet carriers before you have to.
- **Create a disaster preparedness kit:**



- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> First Aid Kit | <input type="checkbox"/> toys |
| <input type="checkbox"/> leashes/harnesses | <input type="checkbox"/> 7-10 days of food and water |
| <input type="checkbox"/> medications | <input type="checkbox"/> pet carrying cases |
| <input type="checkbox"/> food and water bowls | <input type="checkbox"/> veterinarian's contact information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sanitation materials | <input type="checkbox"/> photo of your pet |

When Wildfires Strike

- Evacuate your family and pets as early as you can and follow local officials' evacuation recommendations.
- Remember to take your pet preparedness kit if you evacuate.
- If you evacuate with your pet, put them in a carrier large enough for them to turn around and lie down comfortably.
- If you cannot evacuate with your pets, leave your doors open and alert emergency responders to their location.
- Do not tranquilize your pets. They'll need their survival instincts, should the disaster require that.

After The Fire

- Closely monitor your pet for any signs of distress.
- Make sure the disaster has fully passed and check the air quality index before going outside and assess damage before allowing animals out.
- Keep dogs on a leash and cats in a carrier. Displaced objects, downed powerlines and fallen trees can disorient or injure pets, and sharp debris could harm them as well.
- After the walk, clean your pet's paws and face to ensure there is no ash or debris on them.
- Your pets can be affected by wildfire smoke. If you feel the effects of smoke, they probably do, too. Look out for the signs of smoke irritation, coughing or gagging, red or watery eyes, nasal discharge, noise when breathing or fast breathing, fatigue or weakness and reduced appetite or thirst, and see a vet immediately.
- Give pets time to become re-oriented. Familiar scents and landmarks may be altered and cause a pet to become confused or lost. Familiar bedding will often help alleviate some of the stress related to being displaced.



Storm Preparedness for Pet Owners

Hurricanes and Tornadoes

Severe storms can arrive with little warning, bringing dangerous winds, flooding and heartbreaking separation from pets. Whether you live in a tornado-prone region or along the coast, having a plan for your animals can protect lives when every second counts.

Before the Storm

- Microchip pets or put a tag on their collar with your name, address and cell phone number so they can be returned quickly if you are separated. Make sure microchip details are current.
- Identify your safe area for tornadoes (interior room, basement, or storm shelter with no windows, bottom floor) and review your evacuation plan for hurricanes.
- Keep pet preparedness kits stocked. Aim for 7–10 days' worth.
- Have a crate or carrier for each animal and keep them in or near your designated safe area so they can be secured quickly.
- Practice getting pets quickly to their safe area or into carriers for evacuation.
- Remove dangerous items from safe areas such as tools, chemicals, or loose objects.
- Consult your veterinarian about calming aids for pets who are stressed by storms.

During the Storm

- If evacuating for a hurricane, leave as early as possible and take pets with you along with their kits.
- If you cannot evacuate, keep pets with you in the safe area. For tornadoes, place crates under sturdy furniture if possible.
- Keep pets contained in carriers or on leashes to prevent escape.
- Stay calm and provide comfort with kind words and gentle petting.
- Keep your emergency kit close.

! If an evacuation is possible, take your pets with you. Make sure you take your pet preparedness kit and that your animals have proper, up-to-date identification.



After the Storm

- Make sure the storm has fully passed before going outside.
- Assess damage and hazards before letting pets out.
- Keep dogs on leashes and cats in carriers.
- Watch for downed power lines, sharp debris, floodwater and contamination.
- Give pets time to re-orient since familiar scents and landmarks may be gone.
- Monitor behavior changes such as aggression or fear and give them space.

✿ Tornado vs. Hurricane ✿

Pet Preparedness

STEP	TORNADO	HURRICANE
Warning Time	Minutes or less, plan for immediate action	Days of notice, use time to prepare and evacuate early
Safe Location	Interior room, basement, or storm shelter with no windows on the bottom floor.	Evacuation shelter outside storm zone, or safe interior room if sheltering in place
Emergency Kit	Ideally 7–10 days' supply of food, water and meds	Ideally 7–10 days' supply of food, water and meds
Evacuation	Rare, only if safe to leave before storm hits	Strongly advised, leave early and take pets
Pet Containment	Crates or carriers placed under sturdy furniture	Crates or carriers in safe area or vehicle for evacuation
Extra Prep	Practice getting pets quickly to the safe area	Secure outdoor objects and block pet exits to prevent escape
After Storm	Check for debris, downed lines and unsafe structures before release	Watch for floodwaters, contamination and unstable structures
Behavior Watch	Pets may be disoriented and stressed, give space and comfort	Pets may be disoriented and stressed, give space and comfort



What to Do If You Find a Lost Pet

Have you ever seen a dog or cat running loose on a busy street and feared for its safety? You may have tried to get it out of harm's way, or you may have wanted to but weren't sure how. Here are some tips that can help next time you see a lost pet:



Capture and contain it with care.

Approach with caution, use food to coax it if needed, and, if safe, contain the animal using a leash, fenced area, or a carrier to prevent injury, especially near traffic.



Call the authorities.

Never risk your safety to capture an aggressive or unapproachable animal. Call animal control or police with the exact location instead.



Check for ID.

If the lost pet is wearing an ID tag, try to contact the owner and, if needed, hold the pet briefly while filing a "found" report with your local shelter. Alternatively, take it to a shelter or call animal control.



Scan for a microchip.

If the pet has no visible ID tag, take it to a shelter or call animal control so it can be scanned for a microchip. Many veterinary clinics can also assist with scanning. If you choose to hold the animal, post a clear photo in the shelter's database to help the owner find it.

Post the missing pet online.

Whether you hold the lost animal yourself or place it in the custody of your local shelter, there are several ways you can help find the owner.



Take a Clear Photo

Snap a well-lit picture of the pet, ideally showing any unique markings, collars, or tags.



Post on Social Media

Share the photo and details on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok. Be sure to:

- Set the post to “public” so others can share it
- Tag your local shelter or animal control for more visibility
- Include the location and date the pet was found, and if reunited with owner, be sure to update the group



Create and Share a Flier

Make a simple flier with the photo, a brief description, and your contact information. Post it in the area where the pet was found and distribute it to:

- Local veterinary clinics, shelters, or animal control
- Pet supply stores
- Community networks



Use Lost-and-Found Pet Websites

Add a found report and photo to national databases like:

- PetFBI
- PawBoost
- 24Petconnect



Go Door to Door

If the pet was found in your neighborhood, show the photo to nearby residents and ask if they recognize the animal or know the owner.



Try Community Apps

Post a “found pet” ad in your local newspaper’s classifieds and on neighborhood networks like:

- Ring
- Nextdoor
- Facebook Groups (Most towns have a specific Facebook group for lost and found pets)



➤ What to Do If Your Pet Is Missing ➤

Don't Wait, Act Fast

If your pet does become lost, don't delay. Take the following steps to help bring your companion animal home to safety.

- ✓ Don't waste days hoping your pet will come home. The sooner you begin your search, the better the odds of finding them.
- ✓ Search your neighborhood or the area where your pet was lost and let people know you have a missing pet.
- ✓ Call your pet's name and check any places where they could have become trapped, such as in basements or garages or under vehicles. A lost pet often will hide during the day, so be sure to go out again at night with a flashlight and call for them.
- ✓ Sometimes a can of food can lure a hungry and scared pet to you.
- ✓ Check with your local shelters every day. Don't just call, also visit the shelters to search for your pet. Many animals are difficult to describe over the phone, and only you really know what your pet looks like.
- ✓ Call all animal control agencies in your town and surrounding areas. Animal control officers work through the police department and pick up stray animals. Call them or check their shelters at least every two days.
- ✓ Place ads in local newspapers or newsletters and offer a reward in case someone found your untagged pet.
- ✓ Watch the found ads. Respond to any that might be close to your pet's description. A week of wandering the streets can make white pets look drab gray, and the ad's description might not exactly fit.
- ✓ Call local radio stations. Some radio stations will broadcast lost pet information for free. Give them very detailed information on where your pet was lost, their description and how to contact you.



Use your pet's photo to make "lost pet" signs. Put them up in your neighborhood and in post offices, libraries, pet supply stores, veterinary offices and grocery stores. Inform your veterinarian and groomer that your pet is lost in case they receive a call.



Check with local neighborhood groups on apps like Nextdoor, Ring, and Neighborly.

How to Help Animal Shelters During Disasters

Why Prepared Shelters Matter—And How You Can Help

When disaster strikes, local animal shelters often become lifelines for animals in need. These organizations care for displaced pets, assist in rescue efforts and help families reunite with beloved companions.

While the following guidance is designed for animal shelter professionals, it's just as important for community members to understand the critical role shelters play and how your support can make a difference.

Whether you're a pet owner, volunteer, donor or animal advocate, this section offers insight into:

- ⇒ What shelters need to stay disaster-ready
- ⇒ How communities and shelters can collaborate effectively
- ⇒ Why public involvement matters before, during and after a crisis

If you work or volunteer at a shelter, use the following best practices to build or improve your organization's disaster response plan. If you're a concerned citizen, this will help you better understand how to support shelters in your area and advocate for preparedness.

What Is a Disaster?

Disasters come in many forms—natural, man-made, or infrastructure-related. Any one of these can leave animals without care and communities without critical support systems. Here are common examples:

Natural Disasters

- Avalanche
- Blizzard
- Earthquake
- Flood
- Hurricane
- Lightning strike
- Mudslide
- Tidal wave
- Tornado
- Volcano eruption

Structural or Infrastructure Failures

- Animal transport wreck (train, truck, boat, plane)
- Broken gas main
- Building collapse
- Chemical spill
- Explosion
- Loss of electricity
- Loss of water

Human-Caused Emergencies

- Burglary
- Farm or pet shop abandonment
- Fire
- Riots or looting
- Vandalism

Why Shelters Need a Plan

In an emergency, your shelter becomes a central point of care and coordination. Without a written disaster plan, animals and staff may be left vulnerable, and community trust may suffer. Planning ahead not only protects lives but demonstrates accountability to donors, partners and the public.

**Creating a plan takes time, but it isn't difficult.
The most important step is starting.**



1. Identify Local Risks

Work with your county emergency manager to determine what types of disasters are most likely in your area.

2. Coordinate with Agencies

Gather existing emergency plans from the Red Cross, animal control, first responders and public health authorities. Avoid duplication and clarify roles.

3. Assess Vulnerabilities

Consider all animal-related facilities in your community—from kennels to farms—and how they might be affected during each type of emergency.

4. Pre-Designate Evacuation Sites

Identify and prepare multiple locations outside danger zones to house animals safely, with space for food, water and sanitation.

5. Establish a Disaster Action Team

Select reliable team leads who will oversee:

- ✓ Damage assessment
- ✓ Animal housing and transport
- ✓ Staff scheduling and supervision
- ✓ Records, donations and communications
- ✓ Public and media relations

6. Build a Volunteer Network

Train multiple backup teams to support animal rescue, sheltering and emergency veterinary care. Account for the possibility that staff or volunteers may be personally impacted and unavailable.

7. Stock and Maintain Supplies

Secure cages, transport vehicles, food, water and medical supplies in weatherproof storage. Identify multiple supply sources.

8. Prepare for Medical Needs

Coordinate emergency veterinary services—from triage to surgeries—for a variety of species, including livestock, pets and wildlife.

9. Ensure Communication Resilience

Equip your team with radios, walkie-talkies, or satellite phones in case landlines and cell service go down.

10. Plan for Public Outreach

Create a strategy to inform the public about available services, even if traditional media and communications are disrupted.

11. Bypass Financial Delays

Set up processes to access funds quickly, even when regulations or systems are down. Some supplies and services will require immediate payment.

12. Document Everything

Use photos, notes and reports to track your actions. These records help improve future response efforts and support funding requests.

13. Review and Refine Your Plan

After each emergency response or drill, revisit your disaster plan. Gather team feedback, evaluate what worked and what didn't, and update your protocols to improve future readiness.



Before disaster strikes, contact American Humane Society for training, tools and expert guidance. If disaster hits, we can help with on-the-ground support and essential supplies.

🌟🌟 Your Partner in Pet Protection 🌟🌟

About American Humane Society

For nearly 150 years, we have been at the forefront of virtually every major advance in the humane movement, leading the way in protecting animals through action, advocacy and innovation.

Ready to serve in times of crisis.

What began as the American Humane Red Star® program supporting Army animals in World War I has evolved into a nationwide disaster response team. Our specialized rescue units are stationed across the country, ready to deploy at a moment's notice. Equipped with fully outfitted emergency vehicles and boats, our responders travel wherever animals are in crisis, locating, sheltering and caring for those in need after floods, fires, hurricanes, earthquakes and more.

Whenever and wherever tragedy strikes, American Humane Society is there for animals.

Preparedness starts with each of us. Here's how you can make a difference:

Protect Your Own Pets

- ✓ Follow the guidance in this toolkit
- ✓ Keep emergency supplies ready and up to date
- ✓ Practice your evacuation plan
- ✓ Ensure your pets have current ID tags and microchips
- ✓ Share this resource with neighbors, friends and family

Support Our Mission

Your donation helps rescue animals in crisis and supports all of our programs that protect animals around the world.



Donate today!



Stay Ready. Stay Compassionate.

Disasters don't wait. Take time today to prepare and protect the animals who depend on you.



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