How to Build a Pet Emergency Go-Bag and Evacuation Plan

Pets and Animals · about 25 minutes · 2026-11-06

Prepare to evacuate or shelter with cats, dogs, and other companion animals without improvising under pressure. These 23 steps cover caregivers, pet-friendly destinations, identification, veterinary records, food, medication, sanitation, carriers, vehicle loading, drills, kit rotation, and a careful return home.

Things you will need

- A secure labeled carrier or suitable travel restraint for each animal
- Usual food, safe water, bowls, and a manual opener where needed
- Labeled medications and veterinarian-approved first-aid supplies
- Species-appropriate sanitation, bedding, and cleaning supplies
- Waterproof veterinary records, current photographs, and contact cards
- Secure identification, leash or harness, and familiar comfort items

Assessing Risks and Assigning Responsibilities

1. **List every pet and likely household risk**
   List every animal and the emergencies most likely to affect your household.
2. **Link the pet plan to your household roles**
   Connect the pet plan to your household communication and evacuation arrangements.
3. **Agree terms with a backup caregiver**
   Arrange a trusted backup caregiver who can act if you are away or delayed.
4. **Confirm animal policies at several destinations**
   Identify several safe destinations and confirm their current animal policies.
5. **Map primary and alternate evacuation routes**
   Map primary and alternate routes for the transport you will really use.

Preparing Identification and Care Records

6. **Update identification and microchip registration**
   Fit secure identification and keep microchip registration current.
7. **Write a concise care sheet per animal**
   Create a concise care sheet for each animal.
8. **Pack records in waterproof and digital form**
   Gather veterinary, vaccination, prescription, and ownership records in waterproof form.
9. **Photograph each pet for identification**
   Take current identification photographs of every pet.
10. **Print a compact emergency contact card**
    Prepare a compact emergency contact card for the kit and each carrier.

Packing Food, Medicine, and Daily Care Supplies

11. Choose and label a sturdy go-bag

Choose a sturdy, portable, water-resistant container and label it clearly.

12. Pack rotating food and safe water

Pack a rotating supply of each pet's usual food and safe drinking water.

13. Pack medicines and vet-approved first aid

Pack medications and only the first-aid supplies recommended for your animals.

14. Add feeding and sanitation supplies

Add feeding, sanitation, and cleaning supplies for the whole household of animals.

15. Include comfort items and species essentials

Include comfort items and species-specific essentials without overloading the kit.

Preparing Carriers and Practicing Evacuation

16. Fit a secure carrier for each animal

Select and label a secure carrier or travel restraint for each animal.

17. Acclimate pets to carriers and short trips

Acclimate pets gradually to carriers, handling, and short vehicle trips.

18. Load animals and supplies without delaying exit

Plan how animals, carriers, and supplies will be loaded without delaying departure.

19. Run a timed low-stress evacuation drill

Run a timed, low-stress evacuation drill during ordinary conditions.

Maintaining the Kit and Returning Safely

20. Store the kit near your exit path

Store the kit and carriers where household members and the backup caregiver can reach them.

21. Review dates and contacts on a schedule

Review expiration dates, condition, and contact details on a recurring schedule.

22. Keep animals under control while evacuating

Keep animals under direct control and follow official instructions during an evacuation.

23. Check the home before pets roam free

Reintroduce pets carefully after authorities permit a return.

Sources

1. Prepare Your Pets for Disasters
   https://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/2023-06/ready.gov_prepare-pets-for-disasters.pdf
2. Pets and Disasters
   https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/pet-owners/emergency-care/pets-and-disasters
3. Pet Disaster Preparedness & Recovery
   https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/pet-disaster-preparedness.html
4. Be Prepared: Pet Safety in Emergencies
   https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-pets/emergency-preparedness/index.html
5. Save the Whole Family: Disaster Preparedness for Households With Pets
   https://www.avma.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/aph-save-the-whole-family-pets.pdf

Written as a checklist from https://www.howcompass.com/how-to/Build-a-Pet-Emergency-Go-Bag-and-Evacuation-Plan. Corrections: https://ww