

pet preparedness

INTERVIEW BY ANTIONETTE ROLLINS

Tornados, wildfires and hurricanes—Florida sees it all when it comes to natural disasters. Floridians might know what to do in an emergency, but do you know what to do with your furry friends? It's officially National Preparedness Month, so what better time for pet owners to learn vital information that could help save their animal friends when disaster strikes?

You never want to be in a situation where you are panicking because you don't know where to go in an emergency. Avoid this dilemma by having information on a shelter that accepts animals well before one is needed. This will decrease the likelihood of you being stranded or having to leave your pet at home.

"Unfortunately, the shelters and places where people go don't always take pets," says pet lifestyle expert and author Sandy Robins. "You have to have a plan B, whether it's a friend or whether it's a pet hotel."

In addition to emergency supplies for yourself and family, make sure you have at least three days worth of water and pet food, your pet's medicines and medical records, a leash

or harness and sanitation supplies to clean up your pet's messes. It's also a good idea to have a pet-friendly first aid kit that includes things like tick and flea prevention, antibiotic ointment and bandage rolls. Robins also recommends writing a note to yourself about refrigerated items, like insulin, that your pet might need. Keep all of these supplies together in a convenient container that can be grabbed on the go.

One of the most important things a pet owner can do to ease a stressful emergency is to have correct pet identification. This includes updated ID tags and a microchip (again, make sure the information in the system is updated if you have recently moved).

"The ID truly is a lost pet's ticket home," Robins says. "All pets should have ID, whether they're allowed outside of the home or not."

Love and care in the wake of a disaster is imperative to stressed pets. Things like familiar and mentally stimulating toys will help them cope with these situations. And, of course, preparation is key.

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Sources: ready.gov