

# YOUR PETS AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Animals, like every other member of your family, deserve the protection and security of emergency preparation.

A comprehensive emergency plan includes planning care for your pets before, during and after an emergency. The Winnipeg Humane Society, the Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association and Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) have partnered to provide the following guide to care for pets during an emergency.

## BEFORE AN EMERGENCY

- \* If you must evacuate your home, it's always best to take your pets— but that isn't always an option. Health standards and space limits in most public emergency shelters mean pets are not allowed. One exception is trained guide dogs, who can stay with their owners. Ask your local emergency management officials what the restrictions are for your area.
- \* If you think you may not be able to return to your home after a disaster, take your pets with you or ensure you have a place to leave them. Pets are unlikely to survive on their own for more than a few days.
- \* If you have made plans to evacuate to the home of a friend or family, ask if you can bring your pets. It's also a good idea to ask your veterinarian if he/she will take your pets in an emergency. If, as a last resort, you have to leave your pets behind, make sure you have a plan to ensure their care. Decide on a safe location inside your house where you could leave your pet in an emergency. Be sure to consider:
  - An area that's easy to clean, such as utility areas or bathrooms. Access to a supply of fresh water is essential.
  - Rooms without hazards such as windows, hanging plants or pictures in large frames.
  - In case of flooding, choose a location with access to high counters your pets can escape to.
  - If you have dogs and cats, prepare two separate locations.
  - Arrange to keep small pets like birds and hamsters out of reach of other pets.
- \* Do not leave pets outside. They are safer indoors, protected from the elements, with a supply of food and water.
- \* If you are moving your pets, try to move them in a pet carrier that allows them to stand up and turn around inside. Train your pets to become comfortable with a carrier by putting food or a favourite toy or blanket in the carrier.
- \* If your pets need medication or special diets, ask your veterinarian for suggestions on what to do if you have to leave for several days. Keep an extra supply of food and medications on hand.
- \* Make sure your pets have proper fitting collars that include current licence and rabies tags, and an ID tag with your name, address, and phone number. If your dog normally wears a chain- link choker collar, keep a leather or nylon collar on hand in case you have to leave them alone for several days.
- \* Keep your pets' shots current and know where the records are. Most kennels require proof of current rabies and distemper shots to accept pets. It's a good idea to keep these papers with the other documents you would carry if you needed to evacuate.

- \* Contact motels and hotels in communities outside of your area to find out if they will accept pets in an emergency.
- \* When assembling emergency supplies for the household, include items for pets.
  - food for at least three days – it should be dry and relatively unappealing to prevent pets from overeating when left on their own
  - a supply of kitty litter
  - large capacity self-feeder and water dispenser
  - extra medications
  - food dispensers that regulate amounts for birds and other small caged pets

## **DURING AN EMERGENCY**

- \* Bring your pets inside immediately. Animals sometimes sense severe weather changes and might run away to hide.
- \* Never leave pets outside or tied up during a storm.
- \* If you must evacuate and leave your pet, activate your emergency plan.
  - Leave familiar items such as normal bedding and favorite toys.
  - Leave the dry food in a sturdy container pets cannot overturn.
  - Leave water in a sturdy container. If possible, open a faucet slightly and let the water drip into a big container. Large dogs may be able to obtain fresh water from a partially filled bathtub.
  - Replace chain-link choker collars.
- \* Separate your pets for their safety.
- \* Cover bird cages with cloth.
- \* Put a sign on your door telling emergency responders there are animals inside and where they are located.

## **AFTER AN EMERGENCY**

- \* In the first few days after the disaster, leash your pets when they go outside and always maintain close contact. Familiar scents and landmarks may be altered and your pet may get confused or lost. Snakes or other dangerous animals may be brought into the area with floods, and the stress can make wild animals dangerous. Downed power lines are also a hazard for pets.
- \* The behavior of your pets may change after an emergency. Normally quiet and friendly pets may become aggressive or defensive. Watch your animals closely. Leash dogs and place them in a fenced yard with access to shelter and water.

For more information contact your local veterinarian, humane society or EMO office.