

Guidance for Pet Owners in an Emergency

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Amendment Sheet

This document will be reviewed at least annually and any necessary amendments will be included. Any revisions required by Council Officers or partner agencies should be forwarded to Damion.Collins@publicagroup.uk for consideration.

Amendment Number	Date of Amendment	Comments	Signature

Introduction

This document is designed to assist pet owners to prepare for an emergency situation. It does not refer to every possible type of pet, however it has been prepared with non-stereotypical pets also considered - be prepared to adapt this information to your personal needs and seek out information that is specific to your pets.

Evacuations can be necessary for various reasons, from major incidents such as floods and fires to smaller scale incidents such as gas leaks. Evacuations can last for anything from a few hours to several days or even longer so being prepared is advised. Those who take the time to prepare themselves and their pets will encounter less stress, worry and difficulty during an emergency. It is important to understand the types of emergency that may affect your area and the roles of the emergency services should something happen. Take the time now to get yourself and your pet ready. There are also preparations you can start to make as soon as authorities announce that there is a potential situation developing, such as keeping your cat indoors so you don't have to search for them. If you have advance warning of a potential evacuation then try to place your pets somewhere safe such as a local cattery or boarding kennel – local animal charities may also be able to help.

Besides emergencies that can affect your home there may be circumstances where you could be prevented from getting home, for example if you are injured or there is bad weather. You could consider giving a house key to a trusted neighbour or friend so that in the event of you not being able to return home they could give essential care to your pet/s while you are detained. Obviously they would need instructions about what care is needed and the location of food etc and also ideally they would be known to your pets. If your pet is a dog then you must ensure that the neighbour can safely enter the house without being attacked. The key should be to a door that opens onto an enclosed garden in the case of any pet that might run off.

Please note that in the event of an evacuation the Council will not accept responsibility for pets. Pet owners are solely responsible for their own pets' safety and welfare.

Alternative accommodation

If you must evacuate during an emergency, try to take your pet with you - do not leave them in your home on their own if at all possible. However, if you are going to a Rest Centre, it is important to understand that, depending on the location of the Rest Centre, animals may not be able to be accommodated. Assistance Animals who assist people with disabilities will, of course, be permitted in the Rest Centre. If you have more than one pet, they may be more comfortable if kept together, but be prepared to temporarily house them separately. To prepare for this, please make arrangements in advance for your pet to stay with family or friends in the event of an emergency wherever possible. It is a good idea to have two emergency places planned for your pets to stay, in case one set of people are unable to help for some reason when you need them.

Pet supplies

Think about the basics first: food, water and clothing. Consider two kits, one containing all you and your pet would need if you stay in the house for some time and another smaller kit that you can take with you if required. Review your kits regularly to ensure that contents are fresh and still useable – think about packing the following:

- food – at least three days' worth per pet, stored in an airtight, water-proof container
- water – at least three days' worth specifically for your pets
- medication – keep an extra supply of any medicine including any details that may be needed to re-supply and the name and dosage of the medication written down
- important information/documents – contact details for vet/cattery/kennel/animal shelter, vaccination records, insurance details, microchip details
- pet first aid kit – talk to your vet about what is most appropriate for your pet but a basic kit could include bandages, tape, scissors, sterile saline solution for flushing wounds and gauze, towels or cloth to stem bleeding
- pet carrier or crate – a properly designed pet carrier is the best way to transport your pet especially in an emergency situation
- photograph - A photograph of your pet for identification purposes – if possible of you and your pet together as if you become separated this can be useful in finding and identifying your pet and proving ownership
- harness or leash
- sanitation – include pet litter and box, plastic bags and newspaper or paper towels
- familiar items – a favourite toy or bedding – familiar items may help to reduce the stress associated with being in an unfamiliar environment and the stress associated with the emergency situation

Leaving your pet behind

If you have to leave your pet behind then do the following:

- depending on what animal your pet is consider giving them free access within the property – do not tie or tether them
- leave them upstairs if there is a flood risk
- never leave them if the risk is fire
- leave enough food and water for 3 days (per animal)
- ensure that where appropriate your pet is wearing ID
- leave a note somewhere visible such as the front door, which will alert emergency services that there are animals in the property, what those animals are and where they are.
- never leave an animal in a car even if the windows are open as they can become dangerously hot in minutes – this is not just a risk in the summer

If you are forced to leave your pet behind contact your Local Authority and ask for the Street Warden Team to inform them that you have done so once you have reached a place of safety. Ensure that you have spare keys to your home so that animal welfare agencies can access your pet if you are not able to do so.

Dealing with livestock and larger animals

It is very difficult to evacuate large animals with little notice so plan in advance where you could take your livestock in an emergency, it is important to **act early**. If you can set up an arrangement whereby a neighbouring farm can temporarily house your animals this can be useful. Consider the following:

- if the location they are kept is safe from danger then check that arks, coops and stables are in good repair and are weather tight
- checking fences, gates and hedges are secure
- if the location is unsafe – if so evacuate animals as soon as possible
- transportation – ensure you have a suitable truck, trailer or other suitable vehicle, or access to one
- transporting your animals to higher ground as soon as possible if the risk is flooding
- your evacuation route – plan it in advance as well as an alternative route should the first route become impassable
- arranging to have experienced animal handlers and drivers to transport them
- taking supplies with you – food/water/bedding/reins/leads etc
- attaching your details to field gates so that you can be contacted in an emergency

Exotic animals

If you have exotic pets such as lizards, snakes, fish or spiders you need to consider:

- whether your pet can be transported
- obtaining a safe and secure carrier which is suitable for their needs
- how you will maintain the correct conditions for your pet
- ensuring you have a supply of any specialist food they may require
- whether there is anyone who could look after your pet if you are forced to evacuate

Garden pets

If you have garden pets such as rabbits or guinea pigs you will need to:

- ensure that hutches are in good repair and weather tight
- consider moving hutches into a covered space such as a shed or garage
- maintain a supply of food and bedding

If you have rabbits that you need to find emergency accommodation for please contact your local authority and ask for the Street Warden Team who **may** be able to help. Please note that this is dependent on available space at a local rabbit rescue centre and that all rabbits would need evidence of vaccination in order to be accommodated.

Pet evacuation plan

To prepare your pets prior to an emergency please consider the following.

Evacuation Plan	Yes	No
If you have to evacuate from your home can your pet stay with a friend, family member or other trusted person?		
Transporting your pet – can your pet be transported? Do you have carriers that are safe and suitable for their needs, including bedding for them? Do you have suitable leads and harnesses?		
Do you have food, water, bedding, litter trays, poop scoops and bags and comfort items such as a favourite toy?		
Do you have relevant medication?		
Do you have copies of their vaccination records and insurance documents?		
Do you have copies of their microchip numbers? Is the contact information up to date?		
Do you have a recent photograph of your pet?		
Does your pet have a collar and a name tag?		
If you have exotic pets such as lizards, snakes or fish will you be able to maintain the correct conditions for them? Do you have a supply of any specialist food they may require?		
If you have garden pets are their hutches in good repair and weather tight? Can they be moved undercover if severe weather is forecast?		
If you have livestock do you have suitable transportation and an evacuation route? Do you have experienced animal handlers and drivers to transport them?		

Consider having a rehearsal of your plan to make sure that it works and that you know what to do and when to do it. This will also enable you to rectify any issues that might arise.

Never put your own life, or the lives of others, in danger by attempting to rescue or protect animals.