



UNITED ANIMAL NATIONS REMINDS FAMILIES TO INCLUDE ANIMALS IN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLANS

Earlier this week, the federal government announced that the United States was back on "orange" alert status for terrorist attack. This heightened alert, as well as the apparent certainty that we are headed to war, prompts all of us to think about our family disaster preparedness plans. And for those of us who are fortunate enough to include animal companions within our households, we want to be sure to include them in our disaster plans.

Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge announced this week that he has assembled an emergency supply kit for his three Golden retrievers, which includes a three-day supply of food and water for the dogs. That's a good start, although UAN's Emergency Animal Rescue Service program typically recommends at least a week's supply of food and water for each animal in the household as extra security.

The threat of terrorist or biochemical attack raises special concerns for both humans and animals alike. But some biological agents that might be used by terrorist are less of a worry. For example, dogs and cats are at a lower risk from anthrax and have no risk from smallpox. And cats are very susceptible to bubonic plague, while dogs are less so.

For more information on biochemical agents and infectious disease and how they affect animals, visit the website of the American Veterinary Medical Association <http://www.avma.org/press/biosecurity/default.asp> This site includes fact sheets on specific diseases such as anthrax and the plague as well as links to state Department of Agriculture resources with more specific regional information. The UAN website also has a special advisory section with specific information on anthrax at <http://www.uan.org/ears/anthrax.html> and on the West Nile Virus at <http://www.uan.org/ears/westnile.html>

In addition, the following are some more basic tips from UAN's EARS program on how to prepare your animal companions for disasters. These tips can apply to any type of disaster, be it a terrorist attack or the threat of natural disaster such as flood, hurricane or tornado. Please also visit the UAN website at <http://www.uan.org/ears/tips.html> for more detailed information and disaster preparedness tip sheets for specific types of animals.

ANIMAL DISASTER PREPAREDNESS TIPS

1. In addition to your regular supply of animal food have at least a week's supply of food and water on hand for each animal in your household. You should also include any favorite treats that your animals like, which can be a comfort to them during the stressful time that follows a disaster. Be sure to rotate the water at least once every other month. It is important to not let animals drink flood water or any other water sources that may be contaminated as a result of a disaster.
2. If an animal is on long term medication, always keep a backup supply on hand, since a veterinary office may not be open for some time following a disaster. If the medication needs to be refrigerated, keep an ice chest on hand to store it in, in case the electricity is off and you are unable to use your refrigerator. If you need ice, you can usually get it from a Red Cross shelter.
3. Always keep a collar and tag on those animals that should normally wear collars. You may want to consider tattooing or microchipping your animals as a more permanent form of identification.
4. Start a buddy system with someone in your neighborhood, so that they will check on your animals during a disaster in case you aren't home. Agree to do the same thing for them. (Note: After the terrorist attacks of 9-11, many New York city residents were scrambling to find ways to check on their animals who were left behind in their apartments that day.)
5. Have a way to contain your animals in case you are relocated from your home. For cats, have a cat carrier to evacuate each cat in your household. (In an emergency, a pillowcase is an alternate way to transport a cat.) For dogs, have a leash for each dog. (A harness is also helpful in case a dog panic and tries to slip out of her or her collar.) Stake-out lines are also helpful for dogs if you are going to be relocated for a longer period of time.
6. Have photos of all of your animals to take with you if you have to evacuate. These pictures can help reunite you with a lost animal.
7. Identify several possible locations where you can take your animals should you have to evacuate. These could include boarding kennels, veterinary clinics, grooming facilities, hotels and motels, and the homes of family and friends.
8. Know where the animal shelters or animal rescue organizations are in your area. You may need to visit them after a disaster to look for a missing animal.
9. Include some toys for your animals in your supply kit. Animals who are confined for long periods of time can become bored and/or stressed.
10. Be sure and comfort your animals during a disaster. They are frightened too, and having you near to give them a hug will help. It will probably do a lot to help you too.