

Emergency Preparedness for your Pet

Are You Prepared?

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With recent world events, many are putting extra thought into disaster planning. It is important to plan for your pets as well. While we are all currently focused on airplane crashes, more likely disasters for our area include tornados, flooding, gas main ruptures, fire, etc.

The time to plan for disaster is before it occurs. Often, once a disaster strikes, there isn't time for anything but to leave immediately. The following checklist walks you through the various rabbit-related items you will want to have ready in the event of a disaster.

One item not covered in the checklist is providing for your pets if you are away from home, at work, etc. It is smart to have a buddy system with someone in your neighborhood to check on or evacuate your animals in case you are not there.

Disaster Preparedness List for Rabbits

A disaster kit for rabbits can be made by putting together the following recommended items. Quantities can be adjusted depending on the number of rabbits you have.

1. **FOOD:** A rabbit's digestive system is very sensitive to stress. During a disaster, you should keep your rabbit's diet as normal as possible. You should have at least 2 weeks supply of high quality rabbit pellets at all times. Keep pellets in an airtight, waterproof container, and rotate the pellets at least once every 2 months. You can store the pellets in airtight containers in the freezer, but if you do make sure to include a large sign that says "FREEZER" in your emergency supplies so they are not forgotten during an evacuation. Include a food bowl. Realize that fresh vegetables may not be available during a disaster.

2. **HAY:** Good quality grass hay is essential to a rabbit's diet. Having a steady supply during a disaster will help keep your rabbit's digestive system functioning properly. An airtight, waterproof container holding at least 2 weeks worth of hay should be available. NOTE: The hay container should ONLY be sealed for transport during a disaster. Hay kept in a sealed container for any length of time will mold and cause health problems if eaten by your rabbit. Store the hay in the container but keep it unsealed, and be sure to rotate the hay once every 2 months.

3. **WATER:** In a cool, dry place, store a 2-week supply of water in a plastic container. Rotate water at least once every 2 months. Include a water bottle or bowl, depending on your rabbit's preference.

4. **SANITATION AND CLEANING SUPPLIES:** Include a small litterbox and enough litter to last 2 weeks. A small container of dish soap to clean water and food bowls, some paper towels, some plastic bags, and a litterbox and cage cleanser.

5. **EVACUATION CAGE AND HOUSING:** Have assembled and ready to go a carrier to evacuate each rabbit in your household. An alternative to a carrier is an "Evacsak." Similar to a pillowcase, it takes up a lot less space than a carrier, and if you have a house full of animals that need to be transported you can get a lot more Evacsaks into a car. (Evacsaks can be found online by doing a simple search or by ordering through RebRod, LLC at 503-465-5201.) Also have a carrier or other traveling cage to house your rabbit if you must be away from home for an extended period. Have a temporary cage large enough for a litterbox. Some of the larger carriers will work, and collapsible dog crates come in all sizes and work well for rabbits. Have a towel or other cover for the cage or carrier so your rabbit has a chance to feel secure and calm and will be protected from intrusion by other animals or people. If you are housing your rabbit indoors at a secure, safe location (such as a friend's house), you may consider a collapsible exercise pen. Use only if your rabbit will not jump out of the pen and only if no other animals can get into the pen. If you are unsure in any way about the safety and security of your location, use an exercise pen only for supervised exercise periods.

With bonded rabbit pairs (or trios, etc.), house them together if possible. If using carriers they can be transported together, but if you're using Evacsaks you should have only one rabbit per sack. You can tie the strings of the Evacsaks together for rabbits that should be housed together on arrival. Be certain to have your name and emergency contact information written on all carriers and Evacsaks.

6. **FIRST AID KIT** A basic first aid kit may contain Betadine solution for cleaning and disinfecting, antibiotic ointment, tweezers, scissors, cotton swabs, Simethicone, powdered Pedialyte (packets that can be reconstituted), oral syringes, Critical Care or vegetable baby food for force feeding if necessary (be sure to rotate your supply of baby food to keep it fresh), and a digital thermometer. A first aid book for rabbits, such as *Rabbit Health in the 21st Century* (www.rabbithealth101.com), is also suggested.

7. **PROTECTING YOUR RABBIT FROM HEAT STROKE** Rabbits are very prone to heat stroke. If you need to evacuate when the temperature is above 90 degrees F, you'll need a way to keep your rabbit cool. Provide shade by covering part of his/her enclosure with a towel. Freeze 1- or 2-liter bottles of water to take with you when you evacuate. If you are unable to refreeze these bottles, you may be able to get ice from the Red Cross. Pack a couple watertight containers that can be filled with ice. Some ice can also be placed in your rabbit's water bowl. You can also dampen your rabbit's ears and body with cool water (do not soak your rabbit or dunk his/her ears in cold water) and fan him/her. If you have access to electricity and a fan, dampen the towel over his/her cage and let the fan blow through the towel.

8. **MEDICATIONS** If your rabbit is on long-term medication, have on hand a 2-week supply, since your vet may not be able to fill a prescription right away. Keep your rabbit's medical records with your disaster supplies.

9. **PHOTOS & IDENTIFICATION** Pack current photos of your rabbit in case he or she is lost during the disaster. Include yourself in some of the photos in case you must show proof of guardianship. Consider having your rabbit microchipped - if it hasn't been already - so that he or she can be identified.



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