

Don't forget pets when bugging out

In our previous column about urban survival, we discussed having a Bug Out Bag put together for yourself and loved ones in the event you are forced to evacuate your home. We also have covered the necessity of having a cache of supplies in case you have to shelter at home. One area we don't want to forget is our other loved ones; our pets. People have a natural instinct to not leave their



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

pets behind. I have seen them run into a burning building to rescue a family pet. A little preparation can make things more safely.

We are responsible for the care and well being of our pets. They are dependent on us for all the necessities of life. Preparing a Bug Out Bag and a contingency plan for them is the smart thing to do. In the event you are asked to evacuate your home, pets are not allowed in public shelters. The exceptions to that are service animals that provide assistance for a medical disability. These animals are not considered pets and are allowed to stay with their owners. Some shelters are now allowing pets, but you will not want to count on that.

If you evacuate the area, with intentions of staying in a motel, plan ahead by checking the rules at the motels you may stay at. Some are pet-friendly and some are not. If you are heading to a friend or relatives home out of the area, make certain that they have facilities to accommodate your pets. If old Uncle Fred lives in an apartment in Denver, he may be less than enthralled to see you show up with a pair of trail horses.

Another idea is to create a buddy system with friends, neighbors or relatives here to help each other with animal evacuations. Make sure your buddy has written permission from you to care of your animals and to access to your pet's emergency kit and kennels. If you are not at home and the disaster prevents you from getting there, having a buddy to care for all things animal will make things flow easier during a tough time. Prearranging this and making certain everyone is on the same page is crucial.

Having this kit prepared is also necessary for those of us who venture into the backcountry camping, hiking, fishing and traveling with our pets. They can get injured, lost or ill and this kit should contain the needed first aid items to care for them. If you are

stranded in the mountains because of weather or other problems, besides your own survival gear, some gear for the critters is nice also to make it easier for them.

In advance, make sure they are current on all their vaccinations and keep copies of all their health records. Carry with you the contact information of your veterinarian. Microchip information, registered with your current address is helpful as is having all animals wear a collar with identification tags. It is a good idea for someone outside of this area to have a copy of all this information.

When dealing with dogs and cats, having one airline kennel or cage for each one is a good idea. Have your name, address and phone number on each one, along with the contact information of an alternate contact. Familiarizing your pets with these kennels ahead of time will make it much easier to load them in the event of an emergency.

Here is a list to get you started on your kit. Keeping extra food and water at home is always a good idea. If you have to shelter at home, and can't get out to a store, the extra food and medicines will see them through.

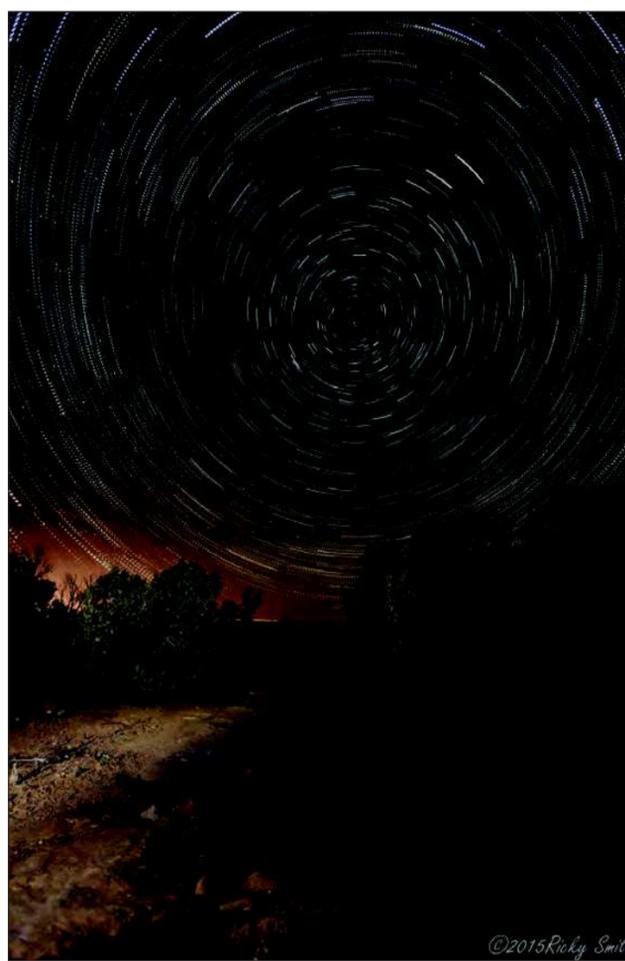
- Food and water for three or four days
- Can opener and plastic spoons and bowls
- Treats and any medications
- Copies of vaccinations and health records
- Collars with tags and microchip information
- Cat litter, litter pan and scoop
- Bedding and toys
- Leash and harnesses, muzzle if needed
- Paper towels, plastic bags and a spray cleaner
- List of emergency contacts for vet, relatives, buddies etc.
- First aid kit for pets

Carrying this kit with you anytime you are out with your pets is a good idea. It will also give you a chance to customize it for your own specific pet's needs. Remember to prepare, care and provide for them during an emergency. After all, they are part of the family. Until next time, see you on the trail.

Mark Rackay is a freelance writer who serves as a director for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse, call 252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org.



Taking care of our pets is something to consider for our emergency plans. They cannot survive without our help. Here, Agie, the author's dog, guards her food and treats for the Pet Bug Out Bag. (Mark Rackay/Special to the Daily Press)



Swirl of stars

This photo is a stack of 48 30-second images that show the path of the night sky. The goal of taking photos of the star trails is to raise awareness about the dark skies around Montrose. (Ricky Smith/Courtesy photo)

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April gardening tips

I always think April just screams, "Spring is here!" I love to see the flowering trees and early spring bulbs, and many of them are putting a fragrant aroma in the air. It makes me so anxious to get out into the garden. Then there's the relentless wind that also signals that winter is blowing away, making way for the summer months. My advice is to make the most of the great spring days, and hold on when the winds come.

Probably, by far, the question that I'm getting asked the most these days is, "How can I get rid of the grass that's coming up in my flowerbeds?" Of course pulling it is great, but if you just have too much to deal with, or if it's so intermingled with your perennials and shrubs that it becomes impossible to pull, there is another way. There's a great product called, Over the top. It's a bit pricey, but you'll probably find that it's money well spent. You simply spray it over the top of the grass. It will kill most grasses without harming your perennials or shrubs. As always, be sure to read the entire label before using it.

I don't know if you've noticed, but insects appear to be out early this year and are doing very well. I've already seen a lot of aphids on roses and barberry shrubs. Scale has also been "crawling" (active and moving on the tree) on pinion trees. When they are crawling, almost any pesticide will control them, so this is the time to do so. After



Gardening A to Z

By Linda Corwine McIntosh

they settle down and a shell forms over them, they become extremely difficult to control. I've also seen thrips on light colored hyacinths. Controlling insects before the populations become large is a wise idea. Many times the insects can be washed off of the plant with a forceful stream of water from the garden hose, however, if this doesn't work, an insecticide may be warranted. Keep in mind, even "safer" pesticides can kill beneficial insects if applied to them. Fortunately, most beneficial insects aren't out yet, but you should still be aware of what insects you're trying to control. Because most of today's pesticides are designed to control specific insects, read the label to make sure the pest you want to control is listed.

Many people are beginning to turn on their irrigation systems, yet drought and water consumption is on people's minds. If you want to do your part to conserve water, check your system when you turn it on to make sure the sprinkler

heads are hitting the target area. If you have areas of the landscape that you are always fighting to keep irrigated, you might want to consider removing the existing plants or grass and replacing it with drought tolerant plants and landscaping. A few xeriscape plants and perhaps some rock may be the answer to that corner area of lawn that always looks bad because it's difficult to water.

If the center of your ornamental grass is dead, it's trying to tell you that it's time to divide it. I know this can be a daunting task but it will be worth it. Your grass will be lush and full again, and you'll have some plants to share with friends or plant into other areas of your landscape. Most summer and fall blooming perennials can also be divided at this time.

With Earth Day on April 22 and Arbor Day on April 24, if you're planning on planting a tree, remember to loosen any roots that were wrapped around the inside of the pot before planting. Also, plant the tree so that the roots are covered with only a couple inches of soil. You want to plant a tree, not bury it! Let the water run slowly when watering the tree after planting. Keep the soil moist, but not waterlogged.

My best advice for your spring gardening is, enjoy. Spring has finally sprung!

Linda Corwine McIntosh is a certified pesticide applicator, an ISA certified arborist and a Colorado master gardener.

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