

Don't forget the furry kids



Tips
from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina slammed into the Louisiana coastline, wreaking havoc, flooding New Orleans and destroying countless homes and lives. Because of the storm, and its aftermath of flooding, nearly 250,000 dogs and cats lost their lives because their owners had left them behind.

The wildfires in California last year have been the worse in recent memory, killing 43 people. The last count for damage was over 10,000 structures destroyed, totaling over a billion dollars. Estimates are hundreds of thousands of pets and domestic livestock were killed or displaced.

We have discussed a multitude of survival scenarios in this column over the years. We all should have a bug out bag with supplies, ready to go, in the event we are forced to evacuate our homes for a wildfire or another emergency. We should also have a cache of supplies at home, in the event we are forced to “shelter in place” for an emergency, such as a pandemic. This last flu season showed me just how real the possibility a pandemic could be.

One of the things we do not want to forget is to provide for the other kids in the family — our pets. Pets, to me, are very important family members and can be completely helpless in an emergency. They rely on us for food, comfort and love, so we do not want to leave them out of our emergency preparedness.

You should have an evacuation plan in place for you and your family. If your plan takes you out of the area, to stay in a motel, plan ahead by checking with the motel you are going to stay at. Many motels are pet friendly, while others are not.

If your evacuation plan will take you to a friend’s or relative’s home, it would probably be a good idea to make sure they have the facilities to accommodate your pets. Showing up at Uncle Fred’s downtown Denver apartment with a half dozen Jack Russell terriers, might make him less than enthralled. He may sooner see a horde of locusts.

A good back-up plan to have in place, involves a buddy system with friends, neighbors and relatives who can help each other out during an emergency. Provide your buddies with written permission to care for your pets. This permission should include the right to enter your premises and kennels, and access your pet’s emergency bug out bag.



(Above) Our pets rely on us for everything. Remember to plan for them when you make your bug out bags and arrangements. (Right) Author’s dogs, Teddy and Leyla, need to be a part of our family emergency preparedness plan. (Special to the Montrose Daily Press/ Mark Rackay)

When a disaster strikes, catching you away from your home, you may not be allowed to access your property. Prearranging this scenario with your buddy can make certain everyone is on the same page.

Have an emergency kit for your pets with you anytime they accompany you into the backcountry. They could get injured, lost or become ill, and this kit should contain the needed first aid materials to care for them. In the event you get stranded in the mountains, and your pets are with you, having a kit with food and comfort items for them would make it much easier for them to get by. They will get hungry, just like you.

We have had all our dogs microchipped by our vet. This is a relatively inexpensive way to have your pet easily identified, and returned to you, in the event you are separated. We do the chip in addition to a collar with an identification tag as well.

Be certain that your pets are kept current with all their necessary vaccinations and carry copies of their health records and vet contact information, along in you kit. Your buddies, who will care for your pets in the event you are separated, should have copies of all this information also.

My wife and I keep a couple



of those portable airline kennels around, in case we have to transport our dogs. Some places may only allow your pets inside, if you have them contained in a kennel. Get a kennel that is big enough for your animals to move around a bit. With multiple dogs, be sure they get along before you stick two in one cage. You don’t want it to turn into the Friday Night Fights.

Write your name, address and contact information, and an alternate contact person, directly on the portable kennels. Spend some time letting your pets familiarize themselves with the portable kennels. You don’t want to shove them in there for the first time, during an emergency.

We like to keep 30 days worth of food at home for the pets, so we have enough in case we shelter at home.

Several of our dogs require prescription medicines from the vet, so we keep an extra supply of those, too.

Here is a suggested list to get you started on your pet bug out bag. Might be smart to make several, and carry one with you anytime the pets are along.

- Food and pure drinking water to last a week.
- Can opener and bowls for food and water.
- Special treats.
- Prescription medicines.
- Copies of vaccinations and health records, to include vet contact information.
- Collars with ID tags.
- Microchip information, if your pets are chipped.
- Cat litter, pan and scoop.
- Bedding, toys and blankets.
- Leash, harness and muzzle, if needed (especially if you have a biter).

- Paper towels, plastic bags and cleaner.
- List of emergency contacts to include your buddies.
- First aid kit for pets.

Most of these items would fit nicely in a backpack. If you have a big dog, the food may be the only thing not to fit. Carry this bag with you anytime your pets are along. Spend some time customizing your kit to the specific needs of your pets. My dogs require I bring a ball, so they don’t miss ball time. Guess you can tell who is in charge at our house.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and avid hunter who travels across North and South America in search of adventure and serves as a Director and Public Information Officer for the Montrose County Sheriff’s Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org

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