



PREPARE YOUR PETS FOR DISASTERS

As part of the duty of care to your cats, it is prudent to plan ahead to ensure their safety and welfare in the event of an emergency.

As we are aware, emergencies can come at any time of year and in a variety of forms – indeed in Victoria in recent times we have seen impacts of natural disasters such as floods, storm damage and bushfires. As such, we all need to be prepared to cope with these emergencies. But emergencies can also occur at any time - they can also come in the form of a personal emergency, such as an unplanned medical emergency that may mean you are away from your home for a period. As we have also seen with COVID, there can also be outside influences that may affect us all, such as lockdown or transport measures restricting not only your own movement but also food or litter availability.

So what you should do for each type of emergency? What you need to do in the event of each type of emergency will differ. The best way to ensure that nothing is forgotten is to calmly plan for each one now, when you are not under any kind of time pressure and can think clearly, rather than rushing at the onset of the emergency. The types of emergencies that you may face can be categorised as follows, and the items suggested are given as a minimum to be covered by any personal plan you draw up.

1. THINGS TO INCLUDE IN YOUR PLAN:

- Know what to do with your pet during an evacuation. Many public shelters and hotels do not allow pets inside. Know a safe place where you can take your pets before disasters and emergencies happen.
- Develop a buddy system. Plan with neighbours, friends or relatives to make sure that someone is available to care for or evacuate your pets if you are unable to do so.
- Have copies of your pet's vaccination record, and make sure your pet is microchipped. Keep your address and phone number up-to-date and include an emergency contact outside of your immediate area.
- Keep contact information for your local emergency management office or animal control office and shelters on hand in case you become separated from your pet.

2. EMERGENCY KIT:


An emergency kit should include:

- Food: Include enough food and water for at least 5 daysworth of nonperishable food (canned or dried) in an airtight, waterproof container Water:
- Carriers. Clearly label each cage or carrier with your contact details. Owning enough carriers to accommodate your pets and ensuring they fit in your vehicle allows for a speedy evacuation. Make sure the cage is big enough and has a litter tray that suits the animal, as each animal may need to live in its cage or carrier for a few days
- Veterinary/Medical Records: Store copies of any medical and vaccination records in a watertight container including your vet's name and telephone number
- Grooming items. Pet shampoo and other items, in case your pet needs some cleaning up.
- A picture of you and your pet together. If you become separated from your pet, a picture will help you document ownership and allow others to assist you in identifying your pet.
- Sanitation: Useful items include newspapers, paper towels, plastic bags, gloves and household bleach (to dilute)

TO PREPARE FOR THE UNEXPECTED, KEEP YOUR PETS IN MIND AS YOU FOLLOW THESE TIPS:

1. Make a plan.
2. Build an emergency kit.
3. Stay informed.

3. STAY INFORMED:

 1800 226 226 The VicEmergency Hotline is a freecall.

 www.emergency.vic.gov.au

 facebook.com/cfavic

 Twitter @CFA_Updates



- Familiar items. Put favorite toys, treats or bedding in your kit to reduce stress for your pets.
- List of emergency contacts in your absence – eg vet, food supplier, essential services
- Medication. Pet medical history, vaccination certificate and veterinary



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BUSHFIRE

Bushfires have become more intense and destructive in recent years, due to changes weather patterns leaving many people and animals coping with the disastrous outcomes.

- Have your emergency kit ready for your pets.
- Make a list of where you could house your pets. This could include boarding kennels, a relative/friend's place or you may keep them with you.
- If you travel to a high-risk bushfire area for a holiday, make sure you have a plan to keep you and your pets safe on hot, dry, windy days.
- It is important that your pets are microchipped Ensure all contact information is current and include an emergency contact linked to your pets' records.
- Monitor local air quality regularly throughout the day and adjust your activities according to the recommendations of experts, including wearing a protective mask when appropriate. To help your pets, you must first take care of yourself.
- Stay current on bushfire status and evacuation alerts and be ready to move quickly. Be proactive and do not wait longer than necessary; fires can travel much faster than you might expect.
- Do not let indoor/outdoor pets roam freely. Their health will be compromised by smoke exposure, they may hide or flee in fear, and you may not be able to locate them quickly in the event of evacuation. Once these pets are confined, make sure all windows, building doors and pet doors are secured.
- Monitor your pets carefully. Bushfire smoke has a greater effect on older and ill animals, particularly those with heart and lung problems. If your pet exhibits signs such as frequent coughing, retching, open-mouthed breathing or gasping, asthma-like symptoms such as wheezing, profuse nasal discharge, swelling or irritation of eyes, unusual weakness, fainting or disinterest in eating or drinking, do not wait for these symptoms to pass or resolve on their own. Promptly contact a veterinary clinic, or if it's outside normal business hours, call your local 24-hour emergency clinic for advice.
- The safest option for people and pets in bushfire prone areas is to leave early or the night before on days of an Extreme or Catastrophic fire danger rating. Late evacuation can be a deadly option



- Pets that are normally well behaved may become fearful and nervous during an emergency. Under no circumstances should animals be left in vehicles. Always carry a thermos filled with fresh, cool water when travelling.
- Know which evacuation routes you will take to reach evacuation sites.
- Contact your preferred boarding facility, animal shelter or evacuation site to let them know you are coming. Note that emergency accommodation at animal shelters and boarding facilities may not be available, or be very limited. If you plan to take your family to an evacuation centre, find out ahead of time if there will be facilities available for your animals. Load your pets for transport, and pack your pet evacuation kit into your vehicle along with any additional supplies you feel you might need.
- If you have to go to work on days of high fire danger , consider taking your animals to a safer place before leaving home. Keep in mind that you may not be allowed home for some time, so ensure that your pet emergency kit accompanies your pet wherever you take it.
- Animals being evacuated, even with their family, experience great stress. Make sure they always have access to food and water and can relieve themselves regularly. Try to keep them in a calm and quiet area of the evacuation centre and, where possible, allow them some regular exercise.



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KEEP CATS SAFE DURING A FLOODS

Summer storms in Australia can produce damaging winds, widespread rainfall, and dangerous flooding. By making plans in advance, you can ensure that all your loved ones can weather any storm – including the animals in your care

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- Prepare your home: Move pets indoors and keep them in a secure area, such as an upper floor. Provide access to food and water, including a 10-day supply.
- Evacuate: If necessary, take pets with you in a proper carrier. Use a leash, harness, or pet cage to keep your pet close.
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HEATWAVE

- Shade for the day. If your pet is in the backyard during the day, ensure they have plenty of access to shade – remember the sun moves throughout the day – so ensure your pet has shade from all aspects throughout the day. Pets can suffer heatstroke or even death in their own backyard on a hot Summer's day without shade or water. . During a heat wave (or extreme temperatures), it is best to have your cat inside in a well-ventilated area, which will give them a break from the scorching sun.
- Cats will generally find a place to keep themselves cool in the heat. It is helpful to make sure their water is in the shade or inside and convenient. You can leave a fan on indoors or put down some wet towels and cats will use them if they choose to or you can also buy cool mats. You will find cats won't be too active in the heat and find a cool place to nap.
- Cats can suffer heat stress if they get caught outside in the sun or use up energy (e.g. running or playing). Watch for signs of heat stress such as panting and excessive salivation. If you see such signs, make sure your cat is in the coolest part of the house and use a wet cloth and dampen the fur. Do not try and dunk your cat in water because that will usually add to the stress.





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PERSONAL EMERGENCIES

This might be an event that means you may need to be absent for a time from your cats, perhaps unexpectedly – eg death in the family, urgent medical attention, accident or other illness. It is suggested that you have all the above items, plus have someone nominated who might be able to look after the cats in your absence – whether that is neighbour, friend, fellow breeder etc

PETS REMAINING ON THE PROPERTY

- Never turn animals loose outdoors – they can't survive "on instinct". Domesticated cats rely on their human companions for many things and are extremely vulnerable outside, especially in bad weather. Instead, leave them in a secure area inside your home with access to upper floors in case of rising floodwaters. For single-level homes, consider providing access to higher ground by positioning a heavy chair near a bench. Make sure that food and water are available there.
- Leave out at least a 10-day supply of water. Fill every bowl, pan, and Tupperware container that you have with water and then set them on the floor or on counters. A single bowl is insufficient, as it may spill. Fill sinks and tubs, too.
- Leave out at least a 10-day supply of dry food. Canned food will go bad quickly. Place supplies in high but accessible areas in case of floodwaters.
- Leave a note on the front door, in the mailbox, or in a window with your contact details and information about the animals in your home. Print and fill out these "[My Animal Is Home Alone!](#)" cards provided by the RSPCA to display in order to alert first responders that animals are on the premises.
- If you can't take your pets with you and they need to be left behind during an emergency leave them in a secure area inside your home or in a place where they will have the best protection possible.
- If flooding is a threat, ensure your pet has access to elevated areas that will allow it to stay out of the water.



CHECKLIST

- Have you included your pets, in your emergency plan?
- Are your pets identified with a collar and council registration tag as well as a microchip?
- Are your contact details current and correct in the microchip database and with your council?
- Are your pet's vaccinations up to date (you will need a current vaccination certificate for your pet to stay at a kennel or cattery)?
- Have you prepared a pet emergency plan and disaster kit and placed it in a prominent place? Does it include food, water, bowls, leads, blankets or bedding, medication, relevant documentation and a travel cage where necessary?
- Have you identified where you will evacuate your pets to? Have you checked with your local council about evacuation options that include facilities for animals?
- Have you determined which evacuation routes are available and safe in an emergency?
- If you cannot take your pets with you, have you left them in a protected space and provided at least 10 days supply of water, in multiple unspillable containers, and left at least 4 to 5 days supply of dry food?

AFTER THE EMERGENCY

- If your pets are injured, seek veterinary treatment immediately.
- If your pets are lost, notify your local council, microchip registry, neighbours and nearby animal shelters. You can also check social media sources (often in emergencies a site is set up to list lost and found animals).

