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Include pets in your disaster planning

Year-end is always a great time to reflect on past experiences and think about the future. We all hope there will never be another Hurricane Katrina, when people were forced to leave their pets behind. Many of those pets filled the polluted neighborhoods. Some were saved and some were eventually reunited with their human families, but most were not.

With California's Disaster Planning for Animals bill, disaster preparation agencies now have to consider the needs of household pets, service animals and livestock in an emergency. The Animal Rescue Foundation (ARF) believes this will protect animals and enforce the idea that companion animals help strengthen families and make better people and better communities.

Susan Furukawa, ARF's animal welfare director, says preparation is key when it comes to helping your pets in the event of a disaster. If you have to leave home suddenly, keep calm so your pets do not panic. Each pet should have a collar with ID tag, license tag for a dog and medical or allergy tag if appropriate. It is astonishing how often a tag falls off, so we recommend that each pet be microchipped.

Keep an emergency supply kit at the ready for your pet. Plenty of water will be needed should your tap water become contaminated, and a water filter,



**ELENA BICKER
PAWS AND CLAWS**

such as you would use for backpacking, is a good idea. About a week's worth of your pet's food should be kept in an airtight container and clearly marked with type of food and date. You may want to replace with new food every six months.

Pet first aid supplies, instruction book and medication need to be included in this kit. Cleaning items, such as towels, disinfectant, soap and a small garbage can with lid, will be valuable. A flashlight with extra batteries, leashes, muzzles and carriers or a collapsible crate for each pet should be ready to go. Bags for picking up feces, a litter box and scooper will also be useful. Your pet's photo with information written on the back (name, age, description, owner's name, phone number and address) should also be kept with these supplies. In the unfortunate situation where you can't get home in time, set up a buddy system with a friend or neighbor to

evacuate your pets.

Leaving your pet at home will place your animal at greater risk for injury or loss, so make every effort to take your pet with you. If you have no alternative but to leave your pet behind, determine well in advance which rooms offer safe havens and are clear of hazards such as windows and flying debris.

Put a Rescue Alert sticker on your front window today to notify people of pets inside your home. The sticker's infor-

mation states the types and number of pets in your household and the name and phone number of your veterinarian. To receive a complimentary emergency pet alert sticker, visit www.arf.net/Resources/sticker-request.html. For more information about planning for your pets before disaster strikes, visit www.arf.net/Resources/emergency.html.

Elena Bicker is the Executive Director of Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation. She can be reached at (925) 256-1ARF (1273)

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Salem and Fry are ARF's Adoption Stars

Salem is an affectionate, well adjusted cat with a lot to offer the right family. He likes other cats and has lived with a sibling in the past.

The adoption fee for Salem is \$50.

Seven-month-old Fry is a busy boy with a zest for life. He will thrive in an active home

with plenty of mental and physical stimulation. Fry bonds very quickly to his new family members and will require a home where someone is home much of the day.

The adoption fee for Fry is \$225 and includes the first six training courses.

Meet your purr-fect match at

Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation, 2890 Mitchell Drive, Walnut Creek, during adoption hours: 3 to 7 p.m. Thursday and Friday, Noon to 4:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. The primary caretaker, kids 16 and younger, and canine family members (dog adoptions only) must be present to adopt a pet at ARF.

Would you like to be part of the heroic team that saves the lives of rescued dogs and cats? Can you share your talents to connect people and animals? ARF volunteers are making a difference! For more information see our Web site, www.arf.net, or call (925) 256-1ARF.

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