

Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University



CATNIP 

The Newsletter for Caring Cat Owners

DISASTER PLAN



Andrew. Frances. Jeanne. Katrina. Rita. A hurricane by any name, still spells disaster. Seeing images of lost, frightened cats and other companion animals separated from their loving owners in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina jars us. More importantly, I hope it propels action to protect our pets against future natural disasters.

We can't predict when or where Mother Nature will unleash her ire, but we can take steps to reduce her punch. In recent issues of *Catnip*, we addressed how to protect pets against natural disasters and of the need for microchip identifications for all cats, even strictly indoor ones.

The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf Coast magnifies that message even more. Pets are indeed part of our families - part of our lives. Cats pose a unique challenge. Unlike dogs, they don't always come when called or feel brave enough to approach a rescuer coaxing them with a treat. Cats tend to hide or flee when disaster strikes and become lost, disoriented, and hungry.

I am grateful to report that faculty, staff, and students from Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University responded swiftly in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. They quickly packaged and shipped supplies to the Massachusetts Veterinary Medical Assistance Team stationed at the veterinary school in Louisiana.

The pharmacy department ensured essential life-saving drugs were included. Others pitched in to coordinate supplies, medicine, and veterinary support to the estimated 2,500 people and their pets transported from the hurricane center to Camp Edwards on Otis Air Force Base in Bourne, Massachusetts.

These were immediate actions, but everyone here understands - and is very willing - to continue their help in the months to come.

Nationally, organizations like The Humane Society of the United States, the American Veterinary Medical Association, and ASPCA have teams rescuing and finding temporary or permanent homes for thousands of pets separated from their owners.

I urge you to take time this week and prepare a disaster kit and evacuation plan for your pets. This includes pet carriers, a two-week supply of food and drinking water, extra collar and leash, pet first-aid kit, photos of your pets, and copies of medical records. To learn more, the AVMA has a helpful booklet called "Saving the Whole Family" that you can download from their Web site: www.avma.org. The HSUS's disaster booklet can be accessed by visiting their Web site: www.hsus.org. We love our pets. Let's show them how much by protecting them the best way that we can.

Arden Moore,
Editor