



**Marion County
Board of County Commissioners**

Office of Public Information

601 SE 25th Ave.
Ocala, FL 34471
Phone: 352-438-2300
Fax: 352-438-2309

Contact: Elaine DeIorio, Public Information Specialist

Office: 352-438-2314 ▪ Cell: 352-857-1434 ▪ Email: elaine.deiorio@marioncountyfl.org

INCLUDE PETS IN DISASTER PLANS

Immediate Release

MARION COUNTY, Fla. (Sept. 1, 2011) – If you’ve lived in Florida for just one summer, you’re most likely aware of how to prepare for hurricanes. And if you’re a native of the Sunshine State, storing oceans of bottled water, walls of canned goods and enough batteries to supply a small toy store is probably perfectly natural.

But there’s one thing that even veteran hurricane survivors often overlook: preparing for their pets. Pets eat food, drink water and take medicine just like the rest of the family. And if they get lost after a storm, they can’t tell rescuers their home address or owners’ phone numbers.

September is Disaster Preparedness Month, and Marion County Animal Services wants to remind you to include your pets in your disaster plans by following the suggestions below:

- Vaccinate your pet for rabies and obtain a county license. Besides being the law in Marion County, this ensures your pet is protected during and after a storm when the chance of your pet coming in contact with stray or diseased animals is even greater. Rabies vaccines are available at the Animal Center on a walk-in basis for \$10. Licenses for sterilized animals are \$10 and \$35 for non-sterilized animals.
- Microchip your pets and get them engraved tags that include at least two contact phone numbers and the pet’s name. Microchips are available at the Animal Center for \$15.
- Pack a pet emergency kit that includes water, pet food, pet first-aid kit, veterinarian records, proof of rabies vaccine, special medications, pet carrier, leash, collar and toys.
- Plan an evacuation destination that accepts pets and ensure you have the means to transport them.

If your home is unsafe and you have nowhere else to go, Marion County Animal Services operates a pet-friendly shelter at Vanguard High School, the only county evacuation shelter that accepts pets. You must provide proof of rabies vaccine and county license to stay at the shelter. Exotic animals, aggressive dogs or animals weighing more than 80 pounds are not accepted. If this describes your pets, make alternative plans in advance.

Whether you’ve been buying flashlights and cans since the first day of summer, or it was Irene that spurred you into stocking your storm stash, don’t forget to prepare for your pets. For more information, visit www.marioncountyfl.org/animalservices.htm.

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