



Pets Need Plans for Disasters Too

Pets - whether furry, scaled or feathered - are valued members of any family. When disasters strike, many families are at a loss of what to do with their pets, especially if they must evacuate. That's why throughout the month of June, which is also Pet Preparedness Month, emergency management teams are encouraging pet owners to incorporate their animal friends into their emergency plans.

Creating a family emergency plan commonly involves building an emergency kit with life sustaining essentials, creating an evacuation plan and memorizing emergency contact information. A few extra steps should be taken for those with pets to account for an animal's needs and safety during an emergency. Pets can't prepare for emergencies, but their owners can! To celebrate Pet Preparedness Month and general readiness, we've outlined our top tips for ensuring you and your pet have the confidence to face an emergency.

Build a Kit When incorporating a pet into an emergency plan, start with a pet-specific emergency kit. This kit can include items like food and water (enough for 3 to 7 days), but should also have feeding dishes, ID tags with owner contact information, immunization records, a carrying case/cage and a proper fitting muzzle. Emergencies and being in new places can be just as nerve wrecking for pets as it is for humans. Having a duplicate of your pet's favorite toy, bed or blanket in an emergency kit can help settle them when they are nervous. Treats are also a good way to entice your pet to remain calm in an unfamiliar setting.

Practice Evacuating The old saying "practice makes perfect" applies to evacuating with a pet. Not only should pet owners practice loading and transporting their pets to allow the animals time to get comfortable traveling in a vehicle, but also to set a routine in motion that can be followed when it really counts. If a pet needs to be transported in a carrier, also practice lining and securing the carrier for travel.

Locate Pet-Friendly Shelters There are several shelter options for pet owners if they must leave home with their pet. County shelters will signify if they are pet-friendly and what types of animals are allowed. Owners may be required to kennel their animals or keep them in their crates or cages in a separate area in the shelter.

North Carolina has several pet-friendly hotels and motels throughout the state. If you are unsure about a hotel's pet policy, it is always best to call ahead and ask. Keep a list of pet-friendly hotels or boarding facilities with your pet's emergency kit so that it is handy on-the-go.

If sheltering in place with a pet, limit their time outdoors and always keep them on a leash and out of hazardous storm debris and floodwaters.

Know How to Reconnect with Your Pet It's hard to think about leaving a pet somewhere if evacuating, but that may be the only choice for some pet owners. Whether dropping a pet off at a friend's, a boarding facility or shelter, have developed and digital photos of you and your pet that prove ownership. This will save time and a lot of stress when retrieving a pet. Having available pet photos also comes in handy if your pet runs away or gets lost during a disaster. Microchipping is another method that will make locating a pet easier.

Disasters can't always be predicted but having a plan in place can reduce stress and even save lives when they strike. Disaster tips and resources for humans and pets can be found at ReadyNC.org.

Free Tobacco Cessation Sessions Offered at Health Department

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. Worldwide, tobacco use causes nearly 6 million deaths per year, and current trends show that tobacco use will cause more than 8 million deaths annually by 2030. The Anson County Health Department is now offering free one-on-one tobacco cessation sessions for Anson County residents who are interested in quitting.

The nicotine in cigarettes is a very powerful and addictive drug. For most people, quitting isn't easy. Current statistics show that it can take a person 30 attempts before becoming successful in quitting, and 1 in 20 smokers attempting to quit are successful without some form of help.

Smokers may have a much better chance of quitting with a support program. Smoking cessation sessions are intended to help individuals quit smoking. Smoking cessation programs combine several methods and targets the fears and problems people have when quitting. They also provide ongoing support for staying away from tobacco.

It doesn't matter how long an individual has been a smoker, quitting is always beneficial. Not only does it lower the risk of getting various cancers, including lung cancer, it also reduce the chances of having heart disease, a stroke, emphysema, and other serious diseases. Quitting also will lower the risk of heart disease and lung cancer in nonsmokers who otherwise would be exposed to secondhand smoke.

The Anson County Health Department is offering free one-on-one tobacco cessation sessions provided by their Health Educator and Certified QuitSmart leader, Dinikia Savage. QuitSmart success rates are high and are proved to be more effective than other methods. QuitSmart also produced impressive quit rates in published research studies, such as the V.A. Medical Center in Durham North Carolina with a 51% quit rate over a 6 month period. With QuitSmart, tobacco users are assured of high quality professional help.

The QuitSmart tobacco cessation sessions will be scheduled on a monthly basis. For more information or to schedule a QuitSmart smoking cessation session, please contact Dinikia Savage at 704-994-3342.

The Anson County Health Department is located at 110 Ashe Street in Wadesboro.

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