

PROTECTING YOUR PET AFTER A NATURAL DISASTER

What health risks are pets exposed to after a natural disaster and what can you do?

As conditions begin to clear and people begin returning to their homes after a flood, it is important for people to remain vigilant in protecting their pets.

Like us, in the aftermath of a flood, your pets may experience both physical and mental trauma. Cats, in particular, are vulnerable to anxiety caused by changes to their environment.

It's important to pay close attention to your pet's health as you navigate the long journey to recovery from a flood. Post-traumatic phobias in pets are common – any changes in behaviour, appetite, or appearance should be addressed by a veterinarian.

With pets displaced and their homes and families affected, it is important they are safely integrated when they go back home and monitored closely.

WE'VE PUT TOGETHER SOME TIPS THAT YOU CAN FOLLOW TO SUPPORT YOUR PETS IMMEDIATELY AFTER A FLOOD.



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- Be aware of water sources such as floodwaters, ponds and puddles that may be contaminated. Do not allow your pets to play in these or drink from them and monitor them closely.
- Assess your property for debris and other hazards before moving your pets back in. Never let pets explore debris as they can suffer injuries or contract diseases. Contact your council if you are unsure about or unable to remove any hazards you identify.
- Create a calm environment for your pets, especially if you have experienced distressing events such as evacuation. Try and keep your pets away from loud noises that may result from clean-up equipment and rubbish removal.
- Monitor your pets for any stress-related symptoms they may develop. Exercise and play can help alleviate this, and contact your veterinarian for further advice.
 - Dogs signal stress through yawning, excessive licking or chewing or excessive shaking.
 - Cats signal stress through excessive vocalisation, inappropriate toileting or vomiting.
- Keep your pets contained in your home as a flood can wash away familiar smells and introduce some new ones. It can also displace wildlife. After the flood, keep your dog on a lead when you go outside to prevent confusion and ensure they don't chase any wildlife.
- If you choose to foster displaced animals be sure to keep non-household members separate from each other. This is so you can minimise any potential negative interactions and the transfer of illnesses between animals.

Remember that you comfort your pet as much as they comfort you in stressful times. Be patient with your pets after a disaster and do your best to stay together after an evacuation. While it is important to try to get them back into their normal routines as soon as possible, make any separation from each other, such as you returning to work, a gradual process.

Once you have recovered, review your disaster preparedness. Our tips for protecting pets in the months following a natural disaster are:

- Re-stock your disaster planning kit, this includes replenishing your first aid kit, as well as re-stocking emergency food and sanitation supplies that may have been used.
- Review and improve your disaster plan to check if anything could be improved in this process and practice it.
- If you've changed your address following the disaster, update your pet's microchip and name tags. This also includes if their name tags are damaged.
- If you don't already have an emergency contact, designate one or more emergency contacts. Ask them if they'd be willing to provide shelter for you and your pets in case of a future natural disaster. Share your emergency plan with your emergency contacts.

More information:

- Visit www.getready.qld.gov.au/pets for more information on developing a Pet Emergency Plan.
- Visit www.awlqld.com.au/awlq-animals/lost-and-found/ if you have become separated from your pets during the flood. We recommend you contact your local council pounds, animal shelters and vet clinics and also check your local lost pet social media pages.
- We urge those people who find flood-affected wildlife in Queensland to call the RSPCA on 1300 ANIMAL (1300 264 265) or Wildcare on 07 5527 2444.

