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Meet the Breed



PYRENEAN SHEPHERD

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AUSTRALIAN «KELPIE



SPECIAL ISSUE



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BREEDER
FINDER INSIDE



BY WENDY BEDWELL-WILSON

Who can forget the images of abandoned pets perched on rooftops in New Orleans, peering helplessly into cameras in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005? Or the stories of dogs trapped behind smoky fire lines during the wildfires in Southern California in 2009?

Sadly, natural disasters often leave four-legged victims behind.

"During Katrina, most of the dogs housed in temporary emergency shelters had been left behind during evacuations," says Janell Matthies, emergency-services manager for the United Animal Nations, a Sacramento, Calif.-based organization that helps animals through a variety of programs, including emergency-sheltering and disaster-relief services.

"Some spent days, even weeks, fending for themselves in the aftermath of the storm," Matthies says. "The lucky ones were rescued and brought into temporary emergency shelters." They came in terrified, traumatized, sick and starving. Some dogs were critically injured. Others suffered chemical burns from the flood water or received injuries from fighting other dogs over food. Some dogs showed signs of stress-induced aggression.

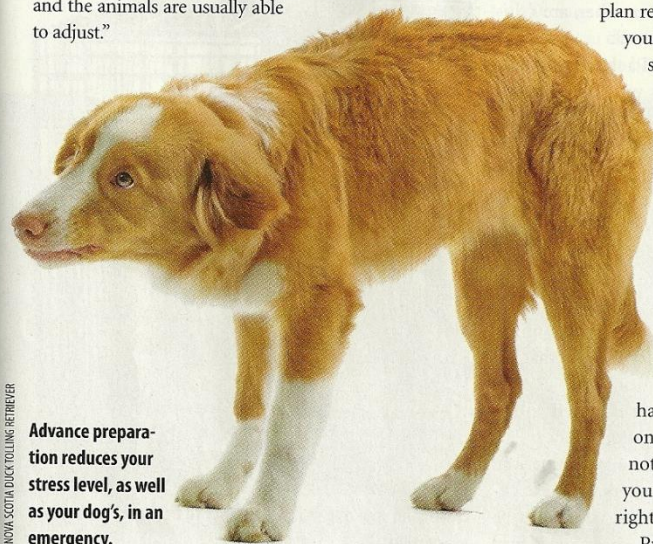
"One has to wonder: If there had been an appropriate evacuation plan in place, would the dogs have had to suffer like that? Some basic evacuation planning might have mitigated the horrific extent of the suffering," Matthies says.

Owner responsibility

Humans must ensure their pets' safety when disaster strikes. How the evacuated dogs fare depends on the preparedness of their owners.

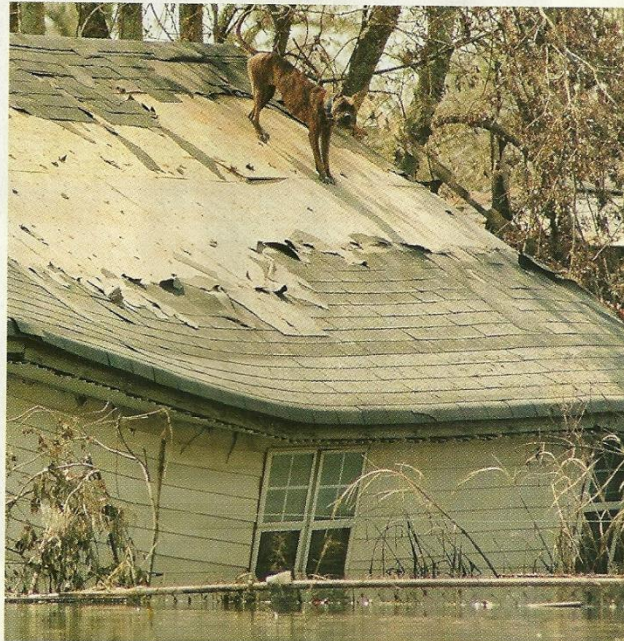
Animals can be affected in many ways, Matthies says. Those that evacuate with their families can become anxious or stressed; those left behind can starve, fall ill, become injured or drown.

"Animals can sense the increased tension that people put out," she says. "But when animals are evacuated appropriately, stress is decreased and the animals are usually able to adjust."



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Advance preparation reduces your stress level, as well as your dog's, in an emergency.



Locate kennels or emergency shelters that accept dogs to avoid leaving your pet behind.

Natural disasters, such as fires, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, tornados, blizzards, and volcanic eruptions, as well as man-made crises, such as house fires, gas leaks and terrorist threats, occur with little warning. If forced to evacuate or hunker down at home, unprepared dog owners might panic. Disaster preparedness and plan rehearsal, however, ensure that your family, including your dogs, survives the crisis together.

Here's how to prepare for a disaster, create a plan and practice it to perfection.

Be prepared

"If you fail to prepare, you prepare to fail," says Ines de Pablo of Wag'N Enterprises, a pet emergency-management company based in Herndon, Va. "It's very likely that you'll have to be evacuated at least once in your lifetime. If you're not ready, you'll panic, and [if] you panic, you won't make the right moves."

Preparing for an unforeseen



Finding Pet-Friendly Places to Stay

The United Animal Nations, a Sacramento, Calif.-based organization that brings animals out of crisis through a variety of programs, including emergency sheltering and disaster-relief services, recommends that dog owners research in advance to find pet-friendly hotels in their area in case of emergency. Here are some websites that can help:

- ▶ BringYourPet.com
- ▶ DogInMySuitcase.com
- ▶ PetTravel.com
- ▶ PetTravelCenter.com
- ▶ PetsWelcome.com