

Pet Emergency Preparedness



How To Keep Your Furry Friend Healthy In A Crisis

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Smart Tips For Prepping With Pets

Our pets are a part of our lives, but people often forget that they will have needs if SHTF too. They'll still need to eat and they may get sick. Storing back pet food and common medications is a necessary part of your prepping. Pets can be useful in survival situations; they can warn you that storms are coming, they can defend your home, and they can perform a multitude of services to help you survive.

Pets Are Weather Radars

Dogs, cows, horses, and other livestock can tell you when storms are approaching. They get skittish and may begin to gather in herds facing the same direction. Depending on the type of animal you have, you may get a few hours' notice to prepare. We could write an entire book on this topic, but for now, just know your animals and what to look for, and read our previous article about [warning signs on animals](#).

PET EMERGENCY KIT CHECKLIST

Stock up on items your pet may need during a disaster. Below are some items to help get you started.

- Pet first-aid kit
- Food
- Water
- Bowls
- Extra collar
- Extra leash
- Medical records
- Two-week supply of medications
- Crate or sturdy carrier
- Blanket
- Recent photos of your pets (in case you are separated and need to make "Lost" posters)
- Toys and bones
- Disposable litter trays
- Litter or paper toweling
- Disposable garbage bags for clean-up



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
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Control and Prevention

When prepping for pets, there are several items that you'll need to stockpile.

Just as with your other prepping efforts, try to choose multi-purpose items that store well.

Here are some examples.

- **Kitty litter** – this can be used for more than giving kitty a place to go. You can also use it to absorb odors in your own waste system. The active ingredient is bentonite, an absorbent clay with unique clumping properties. It's also a sealant that can be used to seal koi or algae ponds. Since you can add water to it to make a

slurry, it may also be useful to seal cracks to keep the heat in and the cold out sodium bentonite can also help heal wounds and boils by drawing toxins out. Make sure that you buy unscented kitty litter with only bentonite (or bentonite and diatomaceous earth). Avoid the kind that reduces dust, too.

- **Pet Food.** This is just an opinion and I'm sure that we'll have a lively discussion about it, but you may want to consider storing foods such as tuna or low-sodium beef stew that you may find on sale BOGO (or even free with coupons) in place of part of your pet food. That way, your pet food is also edible by people, and frankly will cost less than buying canned dog or cat food. It may not be ideal now but if SHTF, it'll do!
- **Leashes and Collars.** Make your leashes and collars from paracord that can be disassembled and used in an emergency.

Training Pets for Emergencies

There are several reasons why you should provide your pet with training in case of emergency. Dogs or [even birds can provide protection](#), horses can be used for work or as a means of transportation and even pigs can be trained. But the keyword is training. Just as your animals can help you if properly trained, a barking dog or a bucking horse can be your downfall. Here are some basic training categories that you should provide when prepping for pets.

- **Obedience.** Your dogs should be trained to come, to be quiet and to sit/stay. In case you're hiding, a barking dog can be a dead giveaway that you're there. Your horse or mule should be taught to stand still to be saddled and mounted and to take a bit without a fight. You can lose valuable time chasing it in circles trying to mount.
- **Desensitization.** Many things will be strange to your animals. The sounds of guns, flapping tarps, the smell of smoke; all of these can frighten animals. Get them used to all of this before SHTF so that they will remain obedient, useful and safe if SHTF.
- **Service.** Train your animals to be of use. Dogs can pull people or small carts, carry backpacks and act as protectors. Horses, mules or donkeys can be ridden or used as plow animals and can pull the sick or wounded. Pigs can be trained to defend the house or even carry items. Birds can even be trained to protect you or to act as an alarm. Train your pets to serve a purpose if at all possible; otherwise they'll just be extra mouths to feed.

Pets are awesome companion animals but when you're fighting for your survival, they can quickly become a burden. If you only have a small space to store your stockpile, even putting back pet food can take away space from what you need to store your own food. By storing food that both people and animals can eat when prepping for pets, you're killing two birds with one stone.

It's imperative that you train your animals so that they don't put you in danger and can actually help you in a survival situation. Research what your pets can do, then either learn how to train them or work with a professional trainer.

And a Few Words for Cat Owners

Let me begin with a little known factoid: America land of the free, home of the cat owners, has an estimated population of almost 100 million cats (95.6 mil officially but they're not all bagged and tagged, obviously); there are more cats than dogs in the US by a long shot! As a cat owner myself, I wondered about the hows and whens and I decided to make a plan and prepare a disaster kit for my cat. It may sound a little bit silly but I think my cat will really appreciate it when the time comes to get out of Dodge.

First things first. Cats are very nice animals, and they make perfect pets. But in case shtf, they are still animals and they will react out of sheer fear and terror. They'll follow their instincts which say "run for your life!!!!" They will disappear to their favorite hiding place 90% of the time, so knowing your cat's hiding places is crucial.

If you've ever tried, you probably know that's almost impossible to train a cat to perform even basic tasks unless it wants to do it. Unlike dogs, cats are often difficult to train, so forget about teaching your cat too many disaster surviving tricks. It's gonna be an epic fail in the end and you'll waste your time.

Truth be told, cats really do seem to have that sixth sense and they are capable of predicting future nasty events like tsunamis or earthquakes, but usually you'll discover its effectiveness only in the aftermath of the disaster. Cats are obviously totally incapable of leaving notes/memos describing future disasters, and since their behavior is often unexplainably bizarre, there's no way to interpret what's causing it until it's too late.

Basically, in case of a disaster, "No cat left behind" is the name of the game if you want your precious kitty to survive the apocalypse. Even if you leave water and food supplies for your cat, you'll never know how long it will take you to return home or what your cat will be doing among the ruins. A disaster can/will make your present friendly environment a Hellhole (think Katrina, Fukushima etc.) that's unsafe for your cat to even walk through.

If you absolutely have to leave your cat, you should leave enough food and water to last for at least 2 weeks, using "safe" bowls that can't be tipped over. The most important thing to do is to

prepare an evacuation plan and a cat survival kit in advance; that's what I did and I think it's the safest bet. Keeping in mind that disasters strike without prior warning, start preparing now and don't forget to:

- Make sure your cat is wearing a collar and a tag containing id/contact information
- Register and microchip your cat. This way it will be easier to get reunited with your furry friend in case you get separated by accident.
- Get a cat carrier. You don't want to run with a cat in a bag in case shtf! Familiarize your cat with its new mobile home. In case you'll need to use it, the cat must not be terrorized by the carrier and you must be able to catch your cat easily in case of an emergency. Practice makes perfect. I know I'm being optimistic because cats are very difficult to catch if they're scared. Just do your best and plan ahead. If you stay calm, your cat will be more likely to remain calm, too.
- If disaster strikes, never leave your cat roaming outside; it's usually much safer inside. Always try to remain calm and comfort your cat.
- Have a "mental" map with the locations of pet friendly motels/animal boarding facilities in your area

Now, let's make a short checklist with disaster supplies for your cat survival kit:

- Canned foods and water (at least a 2 week supply, if possible)
- Litter box/litter
- Paper towels, trash bags, bleach for eventual "accidents"
- Medications refills (if necessary) for at least 2 weeks
- Medical records (vaccinations certificates, prescriptions, microchip number, etc.)
- A solid leash
- A comfy carrier/blankets/towels
- Your cat's favorite toys
- "Missing pet flyers" that contain a current photo of your cat, its age, sex etc. and your contact info (cell phone).
- Proof of ownership for your cat, registration information or adoption papers.



First Aid for Your Pet's Survival

When it comes to accidents, our pets are often worse than our kids. This is going to be especially true in the case of disaster because there may be extra debris and bacteria lying around to cause trouble for your 4-legged friend. If you're a pet owner (or even if you're not, but love animals), pet first aid will be a valuable skill to have.

Top Injuries in Survival Situations

First, it may help to know some of the top injuries that you may be dealing with.

Ingestion of Foreign Substances

Whether the disaster is a storm or an act of war, there will no doubt be scattered debris and leaked substances such as anti-freeze that can do serious harm if your pet ingests them. The tough part is that many fluids smell good and are thus likely to be attractive to your pets.

To combat this, clean the area that your pet has access to immediately and keep it clean. Don't let your pet drink from streams or puddles or dishes that contain rain water unless you know that they're safe. If short, if you wouldn't drink it, don't let your pet slurp it down.

Cruciate Ligament Ruptures

The cruciate ligament is what gives stability to the knee and is typically what is pulled or ruptured when your pet is holding his leg up and refusing to walk on it. The worst part of this injury is that your pet probably won't want to stay still long enough for it to heal. Encourage him to do so.

Heat Stroke or Dehydration

Your pet is just as susceptible to these conditions as you are. You need to make sure that he stays hydrated. If it's too hot, find him shade or let him in the house with you. Don't ever leave your pet in the car because on an 85 degree day, it only takes about 10 minutes for your car to heat up to a sweltering 102 degrees, even if you left the window cracked. Use common sense and if you wouldn't leave your kid (or yourself) somewhere, don't leave your dog there, either.

Cuts and Abrasions

The danger from cuts and abrasions in a post-disaster situation may be 3-fold. First, you probably won't have access to a vet to do any stitching that may be required so you'll have to be prepared to do that. Second, you probably won't have access to antibiotics for your pet so the risk of infection is higher. Finally, stagnant water and polluted puddles are going to be breeding grounds for disease and open wounds are an ideal entry point that can lead to infection or severe illness.

Ideally, keep your pet close in order to reduce the odds of pet injury. If he does get a cut or abrasion, treat it promptly and wrap it to reduce the risk of contamination and infection. Most definitely keep him inside so that he can't get into anything else.

Punctures

Yes, these are sort of in the same category as abrasions and cuts, but there is an added risk to a puncture wound that isn't as prevalent with wounds that are open.

That risk is abscess. This occurs when debris and infection sit in the wound because, unlike open wounds, a puncture may not be able to drain and it may seal over on the top layer of skin, leaving debris and bacteria stuck inside with no way to drain.

Clean punctures extremely well and make sure that they drain well while they're healing.

Snake and Insect Bites

Every single state in the US has some sort of poisonous snake and all sorts of biting bugs. Whether your local threats involve rattlesnakes, copperheads, water moccasins or coral snakes, it's best to keep your dog away from brush and bodies of water. A snake bite in a survival situation may very well be deadly.

Insect bites aren't typically fatal but the infection and disease, such as West Nile Virus, that they carry can be a serious health threat both to your pets and to you. Mosquitoes, ticks, flies and fleas all carry diseases that you don't even want to dwell on.

Lemon juice is a great natural bug repellent as is vinegar, though you may not want your pet smiling like that. Keep your pet inside at night when insects are the worst and do a body check on him every couple of days, at least. If you notice that he's picked up fleas, be proactive and get rid of them.

Broken Limbs

These need to be treated in much the same way that you would treat them in a human, though you need to be sure to stabilize it better because keeping your pet immobile is going to be a challenge.

How to do CPR on Your Pet

Depending on your pet, this may be extremely challenging because you need to find the heart and you need to be careful about how much air you blow in because you can fill the lungs, then the excess will go into the stomach, just like on people. Not good. CPR on pets is similar to CPR on people – remember the ABC's: Airway, Breathing, Circulation.

Saving your pet with CPR

With pets increasingly being treated like a member of the family, many owners are learning emergency techniques like CPR to keep their pet alive before bringing it to a veterinarian.

If there is no breathing and no pulse, begin CPR immediately.



Check for breathing and pulse

Check pulse using middle and index finger below the wrist, inner thigh (femoral artery), below the ankle or where left elbow touches the chest.

Look for other warning signs

- Gums and lips will appear gray-colored.
- Pupils will be dilated and not responsive to light.

If not breathing, give breath to animal

Cats and small dogs

Place your mouth over its nose and mouth to blow air in.

Medium-large dogs

Place your mouth over its nose to blow air in.

Heimlich maneuver

If breath won't go in, airway may be blocked. Turn dog upside down, with its back against your chest. Wrap your arms around the dog and clasp your hands together just below its rib cage (since you're holding the dog upside down, it's above the rib cage, in the abdomen). Using both arms, give five sharp thrusts to the abdomen. Then check its mouth or airway for the object. If you see it, remove it and give two more rescue breaths.

Start compressions if no pulse

Lay animal on right side and place hand over ribs where its elbow touches the chest. Begin compressions. Do not give compressions if dog has pulse.

Animal size	Compress chest	Compressions per breath of air
Cat/small dog (Under 30 lbs.)	1/2-1 inch	5
Medium-large dog (30-90 lbs.)	1-3 inches	5
Giant dog (over 90 lbs.)	1-3 inches	10

Repeat procedure

• Check pulse after 1 minute and then every few minutes.

• Continue giving CPR until the animal has a pulse and is breathing.

• Stop CPR after 20 minutes.

SOURCE: American Red Cross

The first step to CPR on a dog or cat is to check the airway. Be extremely careful because you can get bitten during this process, which can cause much bigger problems. Just as with people,

you can cause further damage when you straighten the neck to clear the airway if there is spinal injury. However, if he's not breathing, that is the priority at that point.

Straighten his neck, gently move his tongue so that it's out of the way, and find out if he's breathing. Don't put yourself at risk. Practice "Look, Listen, Feel" – look to see if you can see his chest rising, listens for breathing, feel for breathing.

If he's not breathing, then you need to do move to step 2 – rescue breathing. Close his mouth, cup your hands around his snout and blow a breath directly into his snout. Look, listen and feel for that breath to go in. If it does, do it again. If it doesn't, rearrange his head to clear the airway and try again. Give one breath every 3 seconds. For a large dog, give a full breath. Adjust the amount of air according to size.

You need to follow through on the third step, Circulation, to see if the animal has a heartbeat. On a dog, place your hand on the left side of the upper chest and feel for a heartbeat. If none is present, you need to start compressions. Do this by laying the dog on his right side. Then locate the center of his chest, which is right about where his left elbow meets his ribcage. This is where you're going to give compressions.

For small dogs, use your thumb and forefinger. For large dogs, use the palm-over-hand method that you use for people. Compressions should be 1.5 inches deep. Deliver 15 compressions and 2 breaths. Check for a return of pulse every couple of cycles. Stop when you get a heartbeat or breathing.

Now you know what the major injuries are for your pets and how to perform CPR on a dog. If you'd like, the Red Cross offers Pet CPR classes, so just check with your local branch.



Natural Anesthetics for Dogs and Cats

If you're planning on keeping your pets with you in a SHTF situation, it may be helpful for you to have alternative ways to ease their pain if they become ill or get injured. Even in everyday situations, you may prefer to use natural anesthetics for your dog or cat instead of chemicals. Remember that even though these herbs are natural, they can still be lethal if you administer too much.

Another thing to keep in mind is that many essential oils are lethal to pets, especially cats, because their bodies don't metabolize herbs well.

We recommend keeping an herbal medicine guide in your bug-out bag or in your medicine kit, so that you can refer to it instead of relying on memory for dosages and ingredients.

St John's Wort

St. John's Wort has been used for centuries to treat depression and anxiety, and also to relieve muscle and joint pain, cramping, back aches, muscle spasms. In fact, it's used in humans for the same things.

It's also a common treatment to help relieve the pain after you get your cat declawed. Finally, this handy herb is being researched to treat the feline convulsive disorder called feline hyperesthesia syndrome, or rolling skin disease.

St. John's Wort can be used topically in a salve or taken internally. The recommended dosage is 12 drops per 20 pounds of body weight, at least in dogs. Consult your vet to get the correct dosage for your pet.



Skullcap

This is another ingredient that's been used for centuries as an analgesic for humans and pets.



Skullcap does have a lethal dosage so use it with extreme care. In the correct dosage it's safe for use with humans, cats and dogs to treat muscle spasms and cramps as well as anxiety and related muscle twitching.

Skullcap can be used topically as an ingredient in a salve or internally, using 12 drops per 20 pounds of body weight. Unlike "calming" herbs such as valerian, skullcap doesn't cause drowsiness if given in the proper dosage. Again, consult your vet before SHTF.

Ginger

Ginger has so many health benefits that there are literally entire books written just on that.

One of the biggest benefits though is its usefulness in relieving stomach pain, abdominal cramps, muscle pains and strains and lower back pain.

Ginger can be used either as part of a poultice or topical rub for treating muscle pains or eaten to treat stomach pain and cramps. It's safe to eat pretty much as tolerated.



Feverfew



Feverfew has been used practically forever in holistic medicine to treat migraines, headaches, muscle cramps, and arthritis. Its prostaglandins make it an anti-inflammatory as well so that may explain why it's so effective.

Alternative medicine veterinarians often use it in place of aspirin for cats because aspirin, as you should know, is toxic to cats in any amount.

Feverfew can be used in a tincture or you can use ½ teaspoon per 20 pound of bodyweight in a tea.

Corydalis Root

If you choose to use this root, do so carefully. It's closely related to the poppy and binds with pain receptors in the body and slows down absorption of choline. It acts as an analgesic for humans and pets.

Corydalis root is also a sedative and an anti-spasmodic and can be lethal if you take too much because it will, quite literally, euthanize you or your pet.



Turmeric



Turmeric has been used for centuries in Eastern Medicine and in Eastern cultures in general for its incredible health benefits.

It's great for your skin and as a cancer preventative but for the sake of this article we're going to stick to the analgesic properties for humans and pets.

Turmeric is great for treating joint pain and has often been compared to using cortisone because of its anti-inflammatory properties.

Turmeric is safe to use with both dogs and cats as well as people and is best used as a spice or to make a tea. Just sprinkle it on food. There really isn't a toxicity concern when you use it like this.

Other anesthetics that have been used for pets include **clove oil** (often used to treat ear infections in cats and dogs), **lavender** (great natural anesthetic for dogs when used to treat bug bites, sunburn and burns) or **cayenne pepper**.

As you can see, your options for natural anesthetics for humans and pets are many. The benefit of many of these herbs is that they also make your food taste delicious and will be excellent barter material, which are both tremendous benefits when living in a survival situation.

Storing items that have multiple uses is smart so these herbs are great additions to your SHTF pantry simply because you can use them for so many things. They do have expiration term, so if you can grow them fresh, even better!