****Preparation is key!

Tropical storms and hurricanes are a fact of life in Florida. Strong winds, large amounts of rainfall, and tens of thousands of evacuees from the coasts can create a situation where normal veterinary care and supplies may not be available for days or even weeks!   Once the storm is sure to make landfall, it is likely too late to find the pet food, medications, and other supplies you will need.

If it is not safe for you to stay in your home, then it is not safe for your pets either! Never leave them behind!

**Make sure that your pet has identification.**  Microchips are a great form of permanent identification. A basic tag with your name and cell phone number (not your landline!) will help concerned citizens identify your pet.  Additionally, make sure that you update your information with the microchip company.  Update any phone numbers and addresses to ensure that your pet makes it home safely - especially if you have to evacuate!

**Know where your local shelters are and whether they are pet friendly.**While some shelters are evaluated to ensure they can be made pet friendly, whether the shelter is opened and pets are allowed is a decision made by emergency management officials a day or two before landfall occurs.  Listen to the media to know which shelters are opened and which are pet-friendly. If you plan on staying at a hotel, find out what their policies are ahead of time.

**Stock up on pet food and medicine.**You should keep 2 weeks of food/water and 3-4 weeks of medicine on hand.  This is especially true if your pet is on a prescription food or has food allergies which might limit what diets are acceptable.

**Have a sturdy leash, harness, and a carrier.**Even for pets that normally will stay right beside you, a storm situation will cause many animals to become overly excited or wander off.  If you need to go out of your home shortly following a hurricane, keep your pet close. Carriers may be required at your shelter.  Don't forget to label it with your and your pet's information!

**Create a hurricane kit.  In addition to your human family's supplies:**

* + **Pet food and water for 2 weeks. Food dishes/Water bowls.**
  + **Don't forget a manual can opener!**
  + **Medications for 3-4 weeks Medical records (clearly showing that all vaccines are up to date) stored in a waterproof container**
  + **Written instructions about your pet's care including feeding schedules, medical conditions, behavior issues, and medicine. The contact information for your veterinarian**
  + **Current photos of your pet (printed - not on a phone)**
  + **Doggie waste bags or cat litter (and box) and a bag to store collected waste in.  Newspapers might make cleanup easier too.**
  + **A sturdy leash, harness, or carrier.**
  + **A collar with identification**

**Planning ahead is the best way to ensure the safety of your entire family.**