

Ways to Keep your Pet Safe and Happy When Caught in the Hurricane Evacuation Gridlock

Original content by Kathy Covey

All pet owners are urged to evacuate with their pets when a disaster strikes. Many times, pet owners and their pets are caught in the traffic congestion caused when an evacuation notice is given.

“Once your car is loaded up with evacuation supplies, your family and your family pets, you’re still facing potentially hours on the road,” said Randy Covey, HSUS director of disaster services. “If you leave when the evacuation notice is given you may find yourself stuck in an endless line of cars heading out of the area to safety.”

Advice to help you and your pets weather the traffic jam:

- Always evacuate early with your family and pets to minimize stress from long lines of traffic.
- Determine where you will go before evacuations are ordered. Find pet-friendly destinations where you can stay with your pet until it’s safe to return home.
- Get your pets used to longer car rides during non-disaster times. Take them on frequent trips to the park or grandma’s house. Don’t let the evacuation trip be your pet’s first car ride.
- Do not leave your pets in the car unattended. In the summer, it takes just a few minutes for the inside temperature of a parked vehicle to become life-threatening hot.
- For cats, use the largest pet crate that will fit into your vehicle – this will provide your cat with plenty of room to sleep and use the litter box. Keep the crate securely shut at all times so your cat remains safely inside.
- Avoid feeding your pets on the day of the evacuation to prevent upset stomachs and accidents. Provide plenty of food and water once you reach your destination.
- Keep visible identification on your pets at all times. Include your cell phone number on your pets’ ID tag. Have an “evacuation” collar that includes an ID tag with an out-of-town emergency contact number. Remember, during an evacuation, nobody will be able to answer your home telephone.
- Use the air conditioner rather than rolling down your vehicle’s windows. Keeping your vehicle cool inside will help stressed pets avoid over-heating. And this will ensure your pets are securely kept inside your vehicle.

- Keep your vehicle gassed up and stocked with your emergency supplies so you are able to leave at a moment's notice. This means extra water and coolant too.
- Take frequent breaks to walk your dog on a leash. Avoid the hot pavement and seek out grass or natural areas.
- Try to stay as calm as you possibly can to ease the stress felt by your pets.

Pet owners can visit [humanesociety.org/disaster](https://www.humanesociety.org/disaster) for more details on making the evacuation car ride easier on you and your pet as well as detailed information on getting prepared.