

**COUNTER-TERRORISM AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS BUREAU**

**NOTICE**  
**1.15**

**May 20, 2025**

**TO:** All Concerned Commanding Officers

**FROM:** Commanding Officer, Counter-Terrorism and Special Operations Bureau

**SUBJECT:** REVISED - DEALING WITH ANIMALS IN A DISASTER

The Emergency Preparedness Bulletin "DEALING WITH ANIMALS IN A DISASTER" has been revised and is now available on the Department's Local Area Network (LAN).

If you have any questions regarding this Notice, please contact Sergeant Adam Elbaz, Emergency Preparedness Unit, Emergency Services Division, at (323) 208-0166.

Handwritten signature of David J. Kowalski in black ink, with the initials "DK" and the word "for" written in parentheses.

DAVID J. KOWALSKI, Deputy Chief  
Commanding Officer  
Counter-Terrorism and Special Operations Bureau

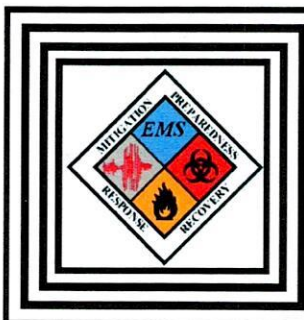
APPROVED:

Handwritten signature of T. Scott Harrelson in blue ink, with the initials "SHA" written in a stylized manner.

T. SCOTT HARRELSON, Deputy Chief  
Chief of Staff  
Office of the Chief of Police

Attachment

DISTRIBUTION "B"



## Los Angeles Police Department Counter-Terrorism and Special Operations Bureau

# EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS *BULLETIN*

April 2025

Prepared by: Emergency Services Division

## DEALING WITH ANIMALS IN A DISASTER

This Bulletin has been created in order to educate officers on the measures taken to deal with animals in a disaster. It includes information which can be utilized by officers in their own personal disaster preparedness and communicated to citizens engaged in personal and community emergency preparedness efforts.

On October 6, 2006, President Bush signed into federal law the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards (PETS) Act of 2006. The law was passed as a result of Hurricane Katrina and ensures that pets and service animals are accounted for during disasters. This Act authorizes the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide rescue, care, shelter, and essential needs for pets and their owners. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, approximately 60% of American households own animals. During large-scale disasters, pet ownership may affect the behavior of large segments of the population. While the care of animals in disasters should never take precedence over the welfare of people, providing care for animals may facilitate the personal safety, and care of a large segment of the human population. The Los Angeles Animal Services (LAAS) is responsible for preparing and planning for this required portion of emergency response and management.

During periods of local emergencies, the LAAS shall develop, and arrange for shelter facilities for animals rendered homeless. In addition, LAAS will provide animal care at the safe refuge areas, relocation centers, and temporary shelters. LAAS will also proactively evacuate endangered domestic animals to appropriate locations near their owners. When necessary, evacuation sites will be activated for equines and other large animals. It is important to note that the Red Cross has a policy against sheltering animals where food is being served or prepared. Nothing in the new legislation changes this established policy. LAAS will make an effort to locate temporary animal shelters near Red Cross locations, but citizens must understand this service may not be available at every shelter location. If your pet has gone missing during a disaster, you can call the Los Angeles Animal Services Evacuation Animal Services Hotline, at (213) 270-8155.

### Preplanning for Pets in Disasters

The following information and preplanning efforts should be considered when including pets in family emergency or disaster plans:

- Locate boarding facilities in the area you would likely evacuate yourself to (near out-of-town family members, etc.). Obtain information on their hours, plans to take in evacuated animals, etc.
- Identify which Airbnb's/hotels/motels in your potential evacuation area are willing to accept animals.
- Check with friends and family outside the area and determine if they have the willingness and capability to take in your animals (enclosed yards, etc.).



- Talk to your neighbors and set up a “buddy system” – review each other’s pet needs, supplies, home access (hidden emergency keys), and agree to take care of one another’s pets if a disaster should keep you away from your homes for extended periods of time. This plan should include making each other aware of the pet’s medical needs/records and veterinarian of choice.
- Breakaway collars on pets to prevent injury should the pet panic, run, or have the collar become caught on a protrusion. This is suggested also for “indoor only” pets, which may panic following an earthquake and suddenly find themselves with access to the outside due to residential damage.
- Microchips are strongly suggested – some Animal Services jurisdictions microchip for free.
- Have a crate, kennel or carrier for each small pet. If you do not have a kennel for large pets, have additional leashes contained in your home disaster kits and your vehicles.
- Include pet needs in your home disaster kits. Food should be rotated every six months.
- Pet first aid kits can be purchased or put together – seek guidance online or at your veterinarian.
- A copy of your animal’s medical records, including the most recent rabies/vaccination documentation, should be maintained with other important documents in your disaster kit. Also include copies of microchip registration, City or County licensing or registration numbers and a recent photograph – proof of ownership is frequently required to retrieve pets from shelters.
- If you are forced to evacuate with small pets such as cats, rabbits, etc., try to remember to put a spare litter box, extra litter, and scoopers in your vehicle.

In times of disaster, animals may behave differently than they normally do. Even the most docile dog or cat can become aggressive towards its owner due to stress or injury. Be cautious when approaching or handling any animal during a disaster or crisis, even if you have been trained in animal care, or search and rescue. Listed below are some of the things to be aware of when interacting with dogs and cats during these times:

- Dogs are instinctively pack animals. If hungry and left to roam, they may join a pack. Emergency personnel should respond to the area as soon as possible to help prevent the dogs from roaming and/or joining a pack.
- Dogs tend to be protective of their property. Approach all dogs slowly and carefully, especially around their homes. Provide them space and stay calm.
- Never stare directly into the dog’s eyes as this may be seen as a sign of aggression on your part.
- Know the types of behaviors and body language of a dog, and do not let your guard down. Stiff front legs, barring of teeth or curled lips, growling, stiff raised tail or tucked tail, crouching low, and raised hackles are all clear danger signs from a dog, indicating that the dog is in fear and could potentially act aggressively.
- When a cat is anxious, frightened, injured or ill, they will attempt to hide under objects, even in the rubble of buildings. Many will also hide in anticipation of storms, etc., as their senses are sharper than humans and they may feel the storm approaching.
- Cats usually remain in or near their home for long periods of time. They will forage for food and water in the immediate area. Cats usually return to burned or destroyed homes.
- During a disaster or crisis, you probably will not be able to tell the difference between feral (wild) pet and domesticated cats as they may all act the same.
- Be aware of cat body language: ears down or back, hackles raised, tail bristled and straight or possibly thumping or irritated swishing, hissing and barring of teeth may be signs of fear and aggression.
- Speak softly and calmly to all animals.
- Always remember that stress and pain may cause all animals more likely to bite, even their owners.

Any questions regarding the content of this bulletin should be directed to the Emergency Preparedness Unit, Emergency Services Division, at (323) 208-0166. Additional information may be found on the Department of Animal Services, web page at [www.laanimalservices.com](http://www.laanimalservices.com).