

## Pro Tips: Relocation of Animals Displaced by Hurricanes Irma and Harvey

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You read the books. You listened to every webinar. You rehearsed every disaster scenario. You know the best practices.

As a proud member of a relocation network, you know the responsibilities of source and destination shelters. Both ends of the relocation system have MOUs in place, adhere to safe and humane transportation procedures, and promise to send healthy animals with proper identification, medical records, and preventive health care.

And then, Harvey happened . . . and then, Irma followed. As the story unfolded, the rain and wind were already coming down, power was out, and many families lacked homes to which to return. Suddenly, shelters in Texas and Florida that never considered relocation were asking for help, and shelters around the country felt compelled to respond.

Many shelters in the South lack veterinarians. Some don't keep records of individual animals, or if they do, their records may have been destroyed in the storm. Some relocation best practices are going to have to wait for another day as the region recovers. The good news is that Southern shelters have A LOT of very nice animals. Southern shelters are teeming with puppies, kittens, and friendly well-socialized pets of all breed types. Transport networks have been working around the clock to match these evacuees with out-of-state shelters that have capacity to help them.

## What Relocation Shelters Need to Know (the abridged version)

### Source Shelters:

1. *Identify your animals.* Put an ID band on every animal. Place a microchip if at all possible. Take a picture of the animal's face and full body. Be sure every crate is well-labelled with the pet's ID and that its cage card is taped on in a plastic baggie.
2. *Put your records in order.* Print a hard copy of available intake information and medical records or transmit them electronically.



3. *Tell your transport partner what to expect:* Send an inventory of the transport to your destination shelter. Ideally, this should be done at least 24 hours in advance. However, this might not be possible until you are loading the vehicle, since the situation is constantly in flux.
4. *Protect your animals.* Vaccinate, deworm, and provide heartworm preventive (regardless of the animal's HW status).
5. *Don't send post-storm strays out of the area:* Relocation is great for animals that were in the shelter at the time of the storm and were already available for adoption. After the storm, it is recommended to keep strays in the area for an extended hold period to enable displaced families to find their pets.

## Destination Shelters:

1. *Be prepared for anything:* The ability of source shelters to comply with 1-5 above may be compromised, and you may need to complete any missed tasks.
2. *Protect your incoming animals:* In mass relocations, pets are best served by standardized protocols for vaccination. With few exceptions for well-documented medical records, it is safest to simply provide vaccinations and parasite medications at intake based on diseases common in the source and destination regions.
  - *Vaccinate cats* against panleukopenia, herpes, and calicivirus using a live virus vaccine
  - *Vaccinate dogs* against distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis, parainfluenza, and parvo using a modified live virus vaccine. Vaccinate against *Bordetella* and parainfluenza using an intranasal vaccine. Consider vaccination against CIV.
  - *Vaccinate all animals* over 3 months old against rabies

*Treat for parasites:* Ticks, fleas, mange, and ear mites are common in the South. So are hookworms, roundworms, whipworms, and tapeworms. *Giardia* and *cryptosporidium* may be increased in moist conditions following a storm.

- Treat all cats and dogs with 5 days of fendendazole and for tapeworms as indicated.
  - Treat all animals with a product effective against fleas and ticks.
  - Consider treating all puppies and kittens with ponazuril for coccidia.
3. *Protect your existing population:* Double-check that all animals are current on vaccinations, and house relocated animals separately from the existing population.

## Disease Control:

1. *Quarantine all new arrivals:* Although not perfect, a strict quarantine of one week should allow for expression of most common incubating infections such as parvo, panleukopenia, influenza, and kennel cough. Distemper can have a longer incubation period.
2. *Heartworm:* Follow the newly released guidelines from the Association of Shelter Veterinarians and the American Heartworm Society, which provide recommendations that prevent the spread of heartworm to new regions via relocation programs.
3. *Gastrointestinal infections:* Perform fecal examinations followed by fecal PCR panels when diarrhea does not respond to good diet and routine deworming.
4. *Skin infections:* Perform skin scrapes, Wood's lamp exams, and cultures as indicated for skin disease.
5. *Respiratory infections:* Perform PCR panels when moderate to severe signs are present, animals fail to response to routine care, or disease spreads among animals. Canine influenza virus has been

circulating in both Texas and Florida, although this has been reported in dog shows, boarding kennels, and veterinary clinics more than in shelters. Diagnosis of the specific causes of respiratory disease cannot be diagnosed based on signs alone.

6. *Things you've never heard of:* Local veterinarians report the presence of leptospirosis, heterobilharzia, pythiosis, Chagas disease, and sundry odd fungal and algal infections in Texas and/or Florida. It is impossible to know everything that might be encountered, so be watchful for unusual cases.

## How to Give or Get Help:

1. *Check our website* for grants, transport providers, and other resources available for source and destination shelters. <http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/2017/09/08/irma2/>
2. *Send money, not supplies.* Funds allow for delivery of the right resource to the right place in an ever-changing landscape, often with more buying power than you have as an individual. Donations of food and supplies, if not specifically requested, can become a storage and inventory burden. Find your favorite charity and give generously.
3. *Do not self-deploy:* Sign up with a group and wait for instructions regarding how your skills can be put to best use. Volunteers who arrive outside of the incident command system and who are not self-sufficient can unintentionally disrupt response systems and divert resources from the rescue missions underway.
4. *Do not remove animals from the region:* Organized relocations are designed to track animals throughout the rescue process. Animals found as strays after the storm should be listed with county animal control agencies and have hold times extended to maximize the reunification of lost pets with their families.

## Get Prepared:

1. Read the CDC's guidelines on Interim Guidelines for Animal Health and Control of Disease Transmission in Pet Shelters <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/animalhealthguidelines.html>
2. Read the new guidelines for heartworm control in relocation programs. [https://asv.memberclicks.net/assets/Brochures/sko\\_transport\\_guidelines\\_for\\_web\\_e.pdf](https://asv.memberclicks.net/assets/Brochures/sko_transport_guidelines_for_web_e.pdf)
3. Read our research about the diseases associated with the relocation of animals rescued during Hurricane Katrina. <https://vetmed-maddie.sites.medinfo.ufl.edu/files/2017/09/2011-Levy-Katrina-Inf-Dis.pdf> and <https://vetmed-maddie.sites.medinfo.ufl.edu/files/2017/09/2007-Levy-Katrina-Diseases.pdf>
4. Watch the 7-part Webinar Series: Companion Animal Transport Best Practices, developed by the Society of Animal Welfare Administrators and the ASPCA. <http://aspcapro.org/webinar-series-companion-animal-transport-best-practices>
5. Complete FEMA's basic online training for emergency responders. Many animal disaster response groups require IS-100.b, IS-200.b, and IS-700a at a minimum. <https://training.fema.gov/is/crslist.aspx>