

## Recommendations for Shelters and Rescue Groups Receiving Animals from the Bahamas following Hurricane Dorian

Thank you for participating in relocation and sheltering of dogs and cats from the hurricane-devastated Bahamas. We salute all the groups that provide life-saving assistance in these times of severe need. Based on our experiences working with in-shelter and community animals in the Bahamas, there is a substantial risk for contagious infectious diseases such as distemper, parvo, and panleukopenia in dogs and cats in the islands. The prevalence of these diseases is far higher than in the U.S. In addition, the flooding conditions can contribute to spread of *Giardia* and *Tritrichomonas* intestinal infections. Receiving shelters and rescue groups should take special precautions to prevent transmission of these diseases to other dogs and cats in their care.

Refer to USDA APHIS policy regarding federal waiver of health certificate requirements for international relocation of animals from the Bahamas to the US. As of 9/5/19, "this guidance is for the Hurricane Dorian-affected areas of Abaco and Grand Bahama only, all other animal imports must conform to current federal, state, and local regulations." [https://help.cbp.gov/app/answers/detail/a\\_id/3707/kw/dog%20via%20sentri](https://help.cbp.gov/app/answers/detail/a_id/3707/kw/dog%20via%20sentri) The State of Florida is waiving requirements for health certificates in accordance with APHIS guidelines, but this may not be the case in all states.

We would like to share some recommendations for safely housing the Bahamian animals in your facility or foster while readying them for placement in a new home.

### Preparation for intake

1. Insure all resident dogs and cats in the receiving shelter or foster homes are properly vaccinated. Every dog should have received at least two DAPP vaccines and every cat at least two FVRCP vaccines for optimal protection from infection by distemper virus and parvovirus (dogs), and panleukopenia virus (cats). If in doubt, re-vaccinate.
2. Insure there are adequate in-shelter or foster options for housing the anticipated number of Bahamian dogs and cats for at least 2 weeks.
  - a. Double-sided housing for each dog and cat is best to reduce stress, facilitate effective sanitation, and mitigate risk for disease spread. This is especially important for cats where inadequate housing is a direct cause of feline respiratory infection.
  - b. It is safest to house foster cats in home without other cats and dogs in homes without other dogs.
  - c. Housing in crates or in group rooms is not acceptable.

3. Obtain information on the following for the Bahamian dogs and cats prior to arranging transport to your location. In some cases, storm impact may have destroyed records, in which case it is safest to proceed as if animals have not received preventive care.
  - a. Source (a shelter before the hurricane, a shelter after the hurricane, pet home, street)
  - b. Health status (healthy, sick, injured)
  - c. Medical care (vaccines, diagnostic tests, treatments)

***Unvaccinated animals and sick animals are very high risk for introducing a contagious disease into your facility or foster homes. These circumstances require strict adherence to biosecurity practices that minimize risk for transmission to other animals.***

## Intake and quarantine procedures for healthy animals

1. Quarantine **healthy-appearing** dogs and cats on arrival.
  - a. House them in a separate room in the shelter that insures complete segregation from the resident animals.
  - b. It is safest to house foster cats in home without other cats and dogs in homes without other dogs.
  - c. Do not house the new dogs and cats near or with puppies or kittens regardless of their vaccination status, or adults that have not had at least two DAPP or two FVRCP vaccines.
2. The initial quarantine period is **2 weeks**.
  - a. This time frame is required for identifying dogs infected with distemper or parvovirus, and cats infected with panleukopenia or ringworm (*Microsporium canis* fungus).
  - b. Vaccinate all new dogs with DAPP and new cats with FVRCP on arrival unless pets have documentation those vaccines were administered as part of the exportation process. Repeat the DAPP and FVRCP vaccination at the end of the quarantine period before release.
  - c. Start empiric treatment for intestinal parasites (worms) and external parasites (fleas/ticks)
  - d. Shelter staff caring for quarantined animals should wear protective clothing to prevent cross-contamination of the resident animals.
    - 1) Protective clothing includes outerwear that covers the entire arms and legs, shoes dedicated to this housing area, and gloves if available.
    - 2) Do not wear protective clothing outside the quarantine area and wash hands thoroughly when leaving.
  - e. Monitor for disease in the quarantined animals during the two weeks.
    - 1) Canine distemper: kennel cough, nasal discharge, vomiting and/or diarrhea, seizure-like twitching
    - 2) Canine parvovirus: not eating, vomiting, diarrhea, crouching in pain
    - 3) Feline panleukopenia: sudden death without any warning signs, not eating, crouching in pain, vomiting, diarrhea
    - 4) *Giardia* (dogs or cats) and *Tritrichomonas* (cats): profuse watery diarrhea
    - 5) Feline URI (upper respiratory infection): sneezing, discharge from nose and/or eyes, squinting, drooling, not eating, open-mouth breathing
    - 6) Feline ringworm: appearance of scaly/scabby skin lesions with hair loss, particularly on face, ears, feet
  - f. Promptly remove sick animals from the quarantine.
    - 1) Relocate to an isolation room

- 2) Collect samples for diagnostic testing to determine cause of illness.
  - 3) Distemper, parvovirus, panleukopenia virus, and ringworm cannot be diagnosed by clinical signs alone because other diseases have similar signs.
  - 4) Diagnostic testing is necessary for diarrhea due to the number of pathogens that cause this disease.
  - 5) ***Diagnosis determines likelihood of infection in other quarantined animals and the need to extend the quarantine beyond 2 weeks.***
- g. Release from quarantine
- 1) If all animals in the quarantine remain healthy for 2 weeks, then they can be released
  - 2) Insure that the second DAPP and FVRCP vaccines and parasite treatments have been completed prior to release
  - 3) For utmost safety and to err on the conservative side, hurricane rescue animals would continue to be managed as a separate cohort and not mingled with the regular shelter population even after released from quarantine. If this is not possible, integration into the population should be made strategically with the most resistant animals – well-vaccinated healthy adults.
  - 4) Do not house with puppies, kittens, and incompletely vaccinated adults.

## Intake and isolation procedures for sick animals

1. Isolate **sick** dogs and cats immediately upon arrival.
  - a. Sick includes sneezing, coughing, nasal discharge, vomiting, diarrhea, scabby skin with patchy hair loss
  - b. House them in a separate room in the shelter that insures complete segregation from all other animals, including resident animals AND the quarantined healthy-appearing new animals.
  - c. Foster homes that take in sick animals should not have other animals due to the possibility of disease spread.
  - d. Shelter staff and foster parents caring for isolated sick animals should wear protective clothing to prevent cross-contamination of other animals and environments.
    - 1) Protective clothing includes outerwear that covers the entire arms and legs, shoes dedicated to this housing area, and gloves.
    - 2) Do not wear protective clothing outside the isolation area and wash hands thoroughly when leaving.
  - e. Collect samples for diagnostic testing to determine cause of illness.
  - f. Distemper, parvovirus, panleukopenia virus, and ringworm cannot be diagnosed by clinical signs **alone** because other diseases have similar signs.
  - g. Diagnostic testing is necessary for diarrhea due to the number of pathogens that cause this disease.
  - h. Diagnostic testing is necessary for skin disease due to the number of pathogens that cause scabby skin with hair loss.
  - i. ***Diagnosis determines appropriate treatments and time necessary for isolation***
2. Provide vaccinations and parasite treatments as for healthy animals, even in the face of illness.

## Infectious disease testing

1. Canine kennel cough: collection of swabs from the nose and throat for the IDEXX Canine Respiratory Disease PCR Panel (test code 2524) that includes distemper virus as well as other respiratory pathogens
2. Feline URI: collection of swabs from the throat for the IDEXX Feline URI PCR panel (test code 2512)
3. Canine parvovirus and feline panleukopenia virus: IDEXX SNAP Parvo test or the Zoetis Witness Parvo test on feces
4. Diarrhea:
  - a. Parvovirus and panleukopenia virus test
  - b. Fecal flotation for intestinal parasites
  - c. Submission of fecal sample to IDEXX for the Canine Diarrhea PCR panel (test code 2625) or the Feline Diarrhea PCR panel (test code 2627) for Giardia, Tritrichomonas, coccidia, and other pathogens
5. Patchy hair loss in cats:
  - a. Woods lamp exam. Most ringworm lesions in cats will be Woods-lamp positive.
  - b. Submit plucked hairs to IDEXX for the Ringworm PCR Panel (test code 3565). This test is accurate and provides quicker results than fungal cultures.

## Contact us

1. Contact Dr Cynda Crawford at [crawfordc@ufl.edu](mailto:crawfordc@ufl.edu) for further guidance on setting up quarantine and isolation areas, diagnostic testing, and treatment options. We also provide assistance with diagnostic testing and disease management.
2. Request a shelter consultation at <https://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/shelter-services/shelter-health-assessment/>
3. Updates from Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program on Hurricane Dorian response may be found at <https://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/category/news/>

## Additional resources for infectious disease control in shelters

1. <https://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/files/2017/01/Canine-respiratory-infections-in-shelters.2018.pdf>
2. <https://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/files/2017/01/Feline-respiratory-infections-in-shelters.2018.pdf>
3. <https://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/files/2017/01/Canine-and-feline-parvovirus-in-shelters.2018.pdf>
4. <https://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/files/2017/01/Management-of-disease-outbreaks-in-shelters.2018.pdf>
5. <https://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/files/2014/10/Collection-of-Swabs-for-Diagnosis-of-Respiratory-Pathogens-by-PCR.pdf>
6. Swab collection from dogs and cats for PCR testing: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_wYP4cFh398](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_wYP4cFh398)