

PET SAFETY & COMFORT GUIDE DURING HURRICANES & GRID-DOWN EVENTS

Pets are family. Proper planning prevents them from becoming a major source of stress or danger during a hurricane.

1. Pre-Hurricane Preparation

- Update pet microchip and ID tags with current contact info.
- Have a clear **pet evacuation plan** — decide early whether you will bug-in or bug-out with them.
- Prepare a dedicated **Pet Go-Bag** for each animal.
- Know which local hotels and shelters are pet-friendly (most in evacuation zones are not).
- Practice loading pets into carriers/crates during family drills.

2. Pet Go-Bag Essentials

- 7–14 days of **familiar pet food** (same brand they normally eat)
- Collapsible food & water bowls
- 7–14 days of bottled water (pets also need clean water)
- Medications + copies of prescriptions and medical records
- Leash, harness, and crate/carrier (sturdy and labeled)
- Waste bags, litter, poop scoop, and cleaning wipes
- Favorite toy, blanket, or comfort item with their scent
- Recent photo of each pet (in case they get lost)
- Muzzle (if needed for stressed dogs)
- Pet first aid kit (bandages, antiseptic, tweezers, anti-diarrheal)

3. Safety During the Storm (Bug-In)

- Keep pets in the **safe room** with the family — never leave them alone.
- Use crates or carriers for security and to reduce anxiety.
- Have a backup plan if flooding starts (move to higher ground in house).
- Watch for heat stress — Florida humidity is dangerous for pets.

- Maintain feeding and walking routines as close to normal as possible.

4. Comfort & Stress Management

- Bring familiar bedding and toys to reduce anxiety.
- Use calming aids (thunder shirts, pheromone sprays like Adaptil, or vet-prescribed sedatives if needed).
- Stay calm yourself — pets pick up on human stress.
- Have backup containment (extra leashes, baby gates) in case of damage.

5. Evacuation / Bug-Out Specifics

- Never leave pets behind — “If it’s not safe for you, it’s not safe for them.”
- Book pet-friendly hotels early (Gainesville and Ocala have many).
- For long drives: Use familiar bedding in crates and take frequent breaks.
- Have a written list of 24-hour emergency vet clinics along your route.
- For cats: Extra litter and a small litter box.

Top 5 Most Important Rules for Pets

1. **Familiar food only** — Do not switch brands during a crisis (causes stomach issues).
2. **Never leave pets behind** — Plan to take them or have a trusted out-of-area friend/family as backup.
3. **Have current photos and ID** — Essential if they escape during chaos.
4. **Plan for waste** — Stock extra litter/bags; poor sanitation spreads disease fast.
5. **Keep them secure** — Use crates during high winds and evacuations to prevent them from bolting in fear.

Pro Tip for Pet Owners: Do a “Pet Drill Weekend” once per year — load the car with pets and Go-Bags as if evacuating to Gainesville. This reduces panic when it’s real.