Hurricanes. Floods. Fires. Earthquakes. This sounds like a description of the end of the world—and the events of the last two years have seemed apocalyptic. When Hurricane Andrew slammed into Florida's coast south of Miami in August 1992, hundreds of thousands of people lost their possessions and homes; hundreds of thousands of animals were killed, injured, or driven from their homes. The following summer brought the Great Flood of '93, the largest natural disaster in the Midwest's history. Fires blazed through southern California during...

An HSUS Disaster Relief Team member helps a thirsty dog rescued from the Great Flood of '93. Floodwaters engulfed an Iowa shelter (inset).

SURVIVING DISASTERS
the next fall, charting more than 200,000 acres. And in Jan-
uary 1994, Los Angeles was rocked awake one morning by an
earthquake that shattered houses, bridges, and roadways.
The toll in animal lives and suffering from these disasters will
never be known. Animals were abandoned, lost, injured, and
homeless. But The Humane Society of the United States, as it
has been for decades, was there to help. And this unusual-
ly relentless pounding by nature has made it possible for The
HSUS to hone the disaster re-
sponse systems with which we
love always sided the animal
victims of disasters. We have al-
so been given valuable new
lessons about preparing for and
coping with natural disasters,
even those of unprecedented
proportions. And there is good
news: our new agreement with
the American Red Cross (see
sidebar, "HSUS and Red Cross
Join Forces") means that we’ve
enabled a greater recognition of
the needs of animals by a major
national relief agency—and
combined two powerful forces for
the benefit of all.

LESSONS LEARNED IN A HARD SCHOOL

It’s heartbreaking that we must be taught by the suffer-
ing of animals, but we can turn our knowledge toward helping
and protecting other animals. For many, one of the hardest
lessons was Hurricane Andrew. No one had seen devastation on
such a scale. No one was prepared. And few knew what to do
in its wake.

The HSUS was on the scene immediately, networking with
other animal-protection organi-
izations and disaster-relief
agencies and supplying man-
power to mobile veterinary
units and field collection cen-
ters for lost animals. What we
saw in the aftermath of Hurri-
 cane Andrew brought to the
forefront questions about disas-
ter relief that desperately need
answers. Evacuation shelters
usually do not allow pets—how
can companion animals be pro-
vided for? More generally, what is the best way for The
HSUS to function as a support and a resource agency for com-
panions, farm, and wild animals before, during, and after disas-
ter strikes? In 1992 we created the HSUS Disaster Relief Team
for the benefit of all.

When the Los Angeles
earthquake struck, The HSUS
was on the scene. Early reports told of
cats and dogs running from their yards
to dark streets as block walls
collapsed. Many animals were hit by cars. Cats hid or were
trapped under toppled struc-
tures, others perished in the
fires that erupted. The HSUS staff
was immediately in con-
 tact with humane soci-
eties and animal-control agencies in the affected areas. We helped search
smoldering rubble for
pets who had been sepa-
rated from their owners and
assisted with animal evacuations and search-
and-rescue missions for
horses and other domestic
animals.

Disasters’ survivors: Lost, in-
jured, and hungry animals re-
cieve desperately needed food,
shelter, medical attention, and
love from HSUS staff and oth-
er volunteers. (top photo)

When the Los Angeles
earthquake struck, The HSUS
was once more quick to re-
respond. Early reports told of
cats and dogs running from their yards
to dark streets as block walls
collapsed. Many animals were hit by cars. Cats hid or were
trapped under toppled struc-
tures, others perished in the
fires that erupted. The HSUS staff
was there, helping shelters and other animal agencies with
their relief efforts.

WORKING ON ALL FRONTS

The HSUS’s on-the-scene
efforts are a vital part of what we do, but they’re only one
part of our disaster relief
program. We’re also working
on other fronts to address the
needs of animals in disasters,
through the work-
shops, seminars, and
training that we began
in Hurricane Andrew’s
aftermath. At Animal
Care Expo ’93 and ’94, day-long sym-
 posia on disaster pre-
paredness and plan-
ing were prominent
events, while numer-
ous smaller workshops and
training sessions have been held across
the country.

A NATIONAL AWARENESS

Our goal is to de-
eliver to the nation
the message that we
must incorporate an
animal relief compo-
nent into all disaster
plans. Companion ani-
mals are such impor-
tant beings in our lives;
their fate is a crushing
loss for disaster vic-
tims and may un-
pound the pain of oth-
er losses at a tragic
time. To save animals’
lives and to spare peo-
ple such anguish, The
HSUS is now spreading this
message: everyone, every-
community, every town and
city, every state, and the nation
must be a part of that
national recognition of the
importance of helping animal
victims of disasters came in
March 1994, when The HSUS
and the American Red Cross
announced that an agreement to work
together on disaster training,
assessment, and communica-
tions. The benefits of this
agreement will be widespread,
for both animals and people.

The Disaster Relief Team swin-
ges into action when a disas-
ter is expected or occurs. Our
role is to support, to help, and
to serve as a resource. We’re al-
so urging and promoting inter-
agency networking and cooper-
tion on local and state levels.

The animals community—shel-
ters and other organizations—
and emergency management
agencies must work together.

Major groups across the coun-
dery are interested in taking
this vital step, and The HSUS is
ready to help. We’re also mov-
ing on the national level—we’ve
begun discussions with FEMA
to voice our concerns and to
urge a greater response to ani-
mals’ needs during disasters by
government agencies. By working
together, we can all reduce ani-
mal suffering and human an-
guish.

This agreement enhances our abili-
ty to provide disaster relief for
the animal victims of disasters,” said Paul
G. Irwin, president of The
HSUS. “It also provides some peace of mind for
the human victims, who can rely on The HSUS to make
sure the needs of animals are ad-
dressed. Victims of a disaster include both humans and
animals, and relief should be directed to both.”
IN CASE OF DISASTER: PROTECT YOUR PET!

Everyone can benefit from having a household evacuation plan in place. It’s the best way to protect your family in case of disaster, whether it’s a large-scale natural catastrophe or an emergency that causes you to leave your home temporarily. Every disaster plan MUST include your companion animals!

Post this page in a visible and accessible place, and make sure every member of your family is familiar with the plan.

Keep up-to-date identification on your dog or cat at all times. Make sure the collar is properly fitted (avoid chain link collars for dogs and use break-away collars for cats). It’s a good idea to have a friend’s or family member’s phone number on your pet’s identification tag in case you cannot be contacted.

Have current color photographs of your pet, showing any distinguishing markings, with your emergency supplies. If you and your pet become separated, these photographs will help identify him/her.

If you know a disaster is imminent, bring your pets inside immediately! Get your animals under control as quickly as possible, either on a leash or inside a carrier.

Disasters often strike suddenly, while you’re away from home. You can improve your pet’s chances for safety if you leave him/her inside, with collars and identification tags, when you go out. Consider an arrangement with a neighbor who would be willing to evacuate your pet in your absence. Make sure that person knows your animals, can locate your emergency supplies, and has a key to your house. Provide him or her with instructions and phone numbers.

IF YOU MUST LEAVE YOUR PET BEHIND...

Leaving your pet at home alone will place your animal at greater risk for injury or loss, so make every effort to take your pet with you. If you have no alternative but to leave your pet behind, there are some precautions you must take.

- Give your pet access to a safe, secure room without windows but with adequate ventilation, such as a bathroom. Leave enough food for at least three days (ask your veterinarian ahead of time what’s best for your pet). A sufficient supply of water is critical. One animal can easily drink several gallons of water a day under stress. Place water in containers that aren’t easily knocked over, and leave a faucet dripping into a bathtub or sink with an open drain. If you expect flooding, provide access to elevated spaces or counters. Leave familiar bedding and safe toys.
- Don’t confine dogs and cats in the same space. Keep small animals and birds safely caged.
- Make sure your pets are wearing proper identification (a collar and a tag).
- Place a notice on your front door advising what pets are in the house and where they are located. Provide a telephone number where you or a contact can be reached as well as the name and number of your vet.
- If you have a bird, leave food in dispensers that regulate the amount of food and supply extra water. Birds must eat daily to survive. Secure cages so they won’t swing or fall. Cover the cage with a thin cloth or sheet to provide security and filtered light.

Never leave a dog tied outside!

IF YOU EVACUATE, TAKE YOUR PET!

Your animal’s best protection is to be with you. But remember, taking your pet requires special planning, so take the following steps:

- Locate a safe place for your pets before disaster strikes. Evacuation shelters generally don’t accept animals.
- Call hotels and motels in your immediate area and a reasonable distance from your home. Ask whether they accept pets, under what conditions, and whether there are restrictions as to the size or number of animals.
- Call local boarding kennels and veterinarians with boarding facilities. Ask about their ability to house animals in case of emergency and/or disaster.
- Ask friends or family members whether they will provide foster care for your pets.

NOTE: Some animal shelters will provide temporary foster care for owned pets in times of disaster, but this should be considered only as a last resort.

DISASTER SUPPLIES FOR YOUR PET

- Portable carrier (essential for cats)
- Food/water bowls
- Supply of your pet’s food and water in plastic bottles
- Litter and litter box for cats
- Supply of your pet’s regular medications
- First aid kit
- Health records, including vaccination records
- Instructions on your pet’s feeding schedules and diet, medications, and any special needs
- Leashes

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