Pets and Mother Nature's wrath

■ BY HARRY KALAJIAN

Hurricane season for Florida extends from June to November. What should we know, and what should we do to prepare for our pets' security as well as our own?.

Regardless of the time of year, you should always have a collar on your pet carrying your pet's identification and other pertinent information. Stop worrying that the collar will leave Fido's neck hair flat, or it doesn't look pretty. It's for Fido's security and a safe return to you if you two get separated. Don't use the excuse that Fido doesn't need a collar with his ID because he's microchipped. Remember, vet offices might be closed and thus unable to scan, while a dog with a collar ID will be a quicker return. A note: For cat collars, use a quick-release type, which will snap off and not choke the cat if it gets hooked onto something. For dogs, hanging tags can also be dangerous or break off. The best type is one embroidered with the ID on it, or a slide type of ID.

Just as you prepare for your needs, the same has to be true for all your pets. What should you have ready at all times? A leash, collar with ID info, dry food plus canned foods (in case the kibble gets wet or damaged), water, a car restraint and a first-aid kit at the minimum. Additional extras include your pet's medications, a small blanket and a life jacket. Even though Fido can swim, in a flash flood or a strong water current he can tire out rapidly. The life jacket could be a life saver.

The safest place in a home would be in a windowless room. If your windows are hurricane-proof, that will be safe haven in lesser storms. And if you need to leave your home, do not leave your pets there alone. Take them with you and make sure they are secured and not loose in the car.

If you are homebound and need to take Fido outside to potty, do it as quickly as possible. Be wary of strong winds that could hurl all sorts of debris at him. It's especially important that small dogs be on a leash even for a quick potty break, because a strong wind could make them airborne. Even the smallest particle can get into their eyes, so be very vigilant. Stay away from trees, as their branches can fall.

And remember this: Just like kids, your pets will react if you are panicking. Stay calm to keep your pets calm.

Have a woof woof of a month.

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