

For Immediate Release

For More Information

May 15, 2009

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## **MAKE EMERGENCY PLANS FOR PETS NOW, BRONSON URGES**

**TALLAHASSEE-** Hurricane season gets underway in just a few weeks, and Florida Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Charles Bronson is reminding people to get an emergency plan in place now for their animals. Bronson says people should not wait until the last minute to think about how they are going to keep pets and other animals safe during a hurricane. While citizens know they need an emergency plan for their families, they also need one for their pets, horses and livestock.

Bronson's Division of Animal Industry website <http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/ai> (click on "Emergency Management") provides information about some pet friendly hotels, horse sheltering facilities, and extensive emergency preparedness information for animal owners who may be impacted by a hurricane. Many county public shelters accept selected animals accompanied by their owners. Bronson says people should contact their local Emergency Management office to learn about that county's specific plans.

"It is important to plan ahead and not wait until an evacuation is underway because people may find themselves with no place to go if they take their animals, or they may be forced to leave them behind to fend for themselves," Bronson said.

Some tips for people with animals include:

### **Pet Evacuation:**

- People should not leave their pets behind when they evacuate because the animals can be injured, lost or killed. Returning to a home after a hurricane may be restricted. It may be days or weeks before someone could check on pets left behind.
- Keep ID tags and vaccinations up to date.
- Prepare a pet evacuation kit, including food and water for at least a week, a manual can opener, medications, medical/vaccination records, a pet carrier, and bedding.
- If possible, make arrangements in advance for evacuation with pets. Know where you can shelter with your pets along your evacuation route.
- Evacuate 2-3 days prior to hurricane landfall to avoid traffic delays and full shelters and hotels
- Contact hotels and motels along your evacuation route to check policies on accepting pets and keep the list handy.

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### **Horses Evacuation:**

- Keep vaccinations and Coggins tests current.
- If possible, make arrangements in advance for evacuation of horses. Know where you can take your horses for shelter along your evacuation route.
- Make sure your horse trailer is “ready to go” or other transport arrangements are prepared well in advance.
- Carry your vaccination record, Coggins test and health papers with you.
- Carry 2-3 days of horse feed and water with you.
- Evacuate 2-3 days prior to hurricane landfall to avoid traffic delays and full shelters.

### **Horse and Livestock Sheltered in Place:**

Sometimes it is not possible to evacuate horses and livestock. The following actions could greatly improve the survivability of horses and livestock sheltered in place.

- Reinforce your barn, and outbuildings with hurricane straps and other measures.
- Open gates or remove fencing so that animals may move to high ground during flooding and to low-lying areas during high winds.
- Purchase a hand pump and obtain enough large containers to store water for your animals for at least a week.
- Protect a supply of animal feed from becoming damaged by flooding or high winds.
- A generator with a safely stored supply of fuel may be essential, especially if you have electrical equipment necessary to the well being of your animals.
- Secure or remove anything that could become blowing debris and injure your animals.

Bronson says these steps should be done in advance of an emergency and it is important that people not put themselves in harm's way to secure any buildings.