

SMART: PETS

In an emergency, don't forget pets

Make arrangements now to be sure your animals don't get left behind if you have to evacuate your home quickly

When the forest fires raged close to Camp Sherman last month, we all admired the firefighters who battled the blaze, saving the small community from destruction.

But there were some other heroes behind the fire lines. Trained community volunteers went into the deserted town to save the animals that had been left behind in the hasty evacuation.

"It was an eerie situation," says Jamie Kanski, executive director of the Humane Society of Redmond and regional coordinator for the Pet Evacuation Team. "A deputy escorted us into the town. It was smoky and real quiet."

The team — an organized effort of the local humane society, the Red Cross, emergency responders and dozens of central Oregon volunteers — rescued four cats and two horses whose owners were unable to help their pets when the evacuation order was given. They also provided boarding and veterinary care for 22 family pets, including dogs, cats and a rabbit.

The dangers faced by the Camp Sherman pets could face yours. Earthquakes, floods, the spreading fire from a neighbor's house: Every one of us faces potential emergencies that can force us to evacuate



DOUG BEGHEL/THE OREGONIAN

Connie Derry, a longtime resident of Camp Sherman, evacuated her dog, Zack, as fire threatened the town last month. Derry said the thick smoke bothered the dog.

pets will need for several days. "Try to never run out of medication and try to never to run out of food. What if the feed store is in the same emergency? What if the grocery store isn't there?" Swanson says.

Have a pet-friendly destination: Most emergency shelters won't

accept pets. Talk with friends and family who are out of your immediate area about coming to their homes, and offer your home to them.

Appreciate the volunteers: No matter how hard we try to prepare for a disaster, we can't always be there for our pets. When the



PET TALK

Deborah Wood

Camp Sherman evacuation order came, there were a few loving pet owners who were out of the area for the day and weren't allowed back into the town to help their four-footed family members.

The reassuring note is that there may be help if we can't be there. The Camp Sherman animals were rescued by the Pet Evacuation Team.

Last Friday, Lisa Swanson got the word that her help might be needed to help animal victims if Hurricane Isabel slams into the East Coast. She says, "I'm packing my bags to be ready."

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Make an evacuation plan: Realistically plan for the possibility of having 15 minutes to evacuate your pets, not to mention your personal belongings.

"Think about how you'd be reacting in a disaster. How would you grab the cat and go?" says Cathy Covey, spokeswoman for the Oregon Humane Society.

Plan how you'll transport your pets that aren't used to going for rides in the car. Do you know where to find your kitty? If you have rabbits in a hutch, how will you get them to safety? Do your parrots' large cages fit in your subcompact? Do all five dogs have crates?

"Have a crate or carrier for every animal, whether it's a cat, dog, rabbit or bird. You might be reeking out in the middle of the emergency; your pet will sense that and will feel more comfortable in a crate," says Lisa Swanson, special agent for the Oregon Humane Society. Swanson also volunteers to help animals in major disasters through the Humane Society of the United States.

Identify your pets: Be sure your pet has an identification tag and an implanted microchip. Also, keep recent photographs of your pet. Swanson recently volunteered to help pets lost in a tornado in Pierce City, Mo. "Almost none of the animals had identification. We took Polaroid pictures, and people tried to identify their pets from those," she said.

Create an emergency kit: This kit should contain every item your