Emergency evacuation plans must include your pets

Oklahomans are familiar with emergency situations that require evacuating their homes. Whether it be for a wildfire or weather emergency, having an evacuation plan in place is necessary. Those evacuation plans also should include your pets because your furry friends most likely can’t survive on their own.

- Locate a safe place to go that will welcome your pets. Because of the health regulations in some states, disaster shelters set up by the American Red Cross cannot accept pets, except for service animals that assist individuals with handicaps.

- Put together an emergency preparedness kit for the people and pets in your home. Store these items in a container that is sturdy and easy to carry.

- The contents of the kit will vary from person to person. The kit for the people in the household should contain flashlights and extra batteries, bottled water, any medications and medical equipment, some shelf-stable food and a first aid kit.

- For pets, be sure to include their veterinary records, pet food, can opener, food and water bowls and extra bottled water.

- Because your escape may be hectic or rushed, your pet may be agitated. Include a strong leash and muzzle in case your dog becomes frightened. For small pets, keep a pet carrier stored with the emergency kit so it is ready to go at a moment’s notice.

- An emergency situation may arise while you are not at home. It is good to have a trusted friend or neighbor who has access to your pets and can get them out of the house.

- Be sure your pet’s identification tag is up to date. Should your pet escape during an emergency, this information is his ticket back to his owners. Consider microchipping as a permanent means of identification.

- For more information about recovering from a wildfire, contact the nearest county Extension office at oces.okstate.edu.