

Is your Dog Ready for an Emergency?

With the fires in the west and the flooding in the south it's hard not to consider what you would do if something similar happened to you and yours. And lately, it seems like more people than ever have a go-bag ready, including one for the pets. But beyond the stuff, what can you do to get your dog ready?

Whether your dog is fearful, reactionary or in some other way un-balanced, consider that it's these dogs – more than any others – who will stress in times of emergency. I've met many people where only one person in the household could handle a particular dog or cat; but what happens when that person gets laid up or the family is affected by an emergency? I think one of the best things we can do for our own pets is to set them up to succeed, even if we can't be by their side.

Things you can do to help your pet get ready for an emergency:

Increase their confidence - Dogs gain confidence by doing something right over and over again, so give them the chance. Bring them different places, challenge them to repeat behaviors at home, downtown or on the trail. Remember, anything different in the environment can affect your dog; so, challenge them around different smells, noises, types and numbers of people, distractions, etc.

Change up their routine – Do this when times are good, and you can focus on them. Fearful dogs need a combination of supporting and challenging behaviors (by us) to gain their confidence and feel secure in different settings. So, feed them a little later one day or a little earlier another. If you're not so predictable, your dogs won't be stressed out when a change of routine does occur.

Work on the Reactivity Now – Don't wait for the perfect time; whether your dog is struggling with dog or people reactivity, fix this bad behavior now. Let's face it, many people don't walk their dogs or bring them places because their dogs act horribly when they do. During an emergency, you don't have that luxury. Suddenly your dog - who may only like one other dog in the world - has to live with your daughters three dogs or worse, in a kennel or animal shelter. Take the time to fix the behavior before your dog is thrown into a situation they're unequipped to handle.

A balanced dog is a joy – and bringing a dog into balance can be one of the most rewarding activities of our lives, but allowing a dog to stay unbalanced can set them up to fail. Take the time to build your dog's confidence today.

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