

Fire Season 2008: SEAACA's Safety Tips

We shouldn't be surprised when wildfires rage through our region, but the latest wave of destruction left many of us stunned. We thank our firefighters for protecting the lives and homes of so many, but the best chance for your family's survival -- including pets and livestock -- starts with you.

A little planning goes a long way during fire season. SEAACA offers these tips:

- If you evacuate never leave your pets, horses, or livestock behind!
- Securely fasten an up-to-date identification tag on the animal's collar.
- Carry a photo of your pet for identification purposes.
- Not all emergency shelters for humans accept pets. Call hotels in safe areas and ask if they take pets; ask managers if "no pets" policies can be lifted during the disaster (Motel 6, Red Roof Inn and many others welcome pets.)
- If you and your pets can't stay together, contact friends, family, veterinarians and boarding kennels to arrange for foster care.
- Pack your vehicle with a week's worth of pet food, water, and supplies such as carriers, leashes, cat litter, medication and a favorite toy.
- Make sure horse trailers are ready for the road. Check and air tires as needed. Build your horse's confidence by practicing loading.
- Have a list of emergency phone numbers (veterinarians, local animal control and humane societies, Red Cross, etc.)
- Keep pets inside if the atmosphere is smoky.
- If you can do so safely: give a hand to those who need help evacuating; open corrals to give trapped livestock a fighting chance; water threatened structures with a garden hose.
- Now more than ever, consider adopting from a local animal shelter. The number of stray and lost animals swells after any disaster, and with fewer homes to return to, shelters fill to capacity.

Stay safe!