



# Saving the *wh* *le* family

disaster preparedness  
*series*



American Veterinary Medical Association



# Saving the whole family

disaster preparedness

***Nature has its fury days:*** tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, fires, blizzards, and more.

Each year, devastating disasters ravage our nation. No one is exempt from the possibility of being affected personally. You need to prepare for yourself and for your animals in case of a disaster.

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has developed this booklet, with support from the American Veterinary Medical Foundation (AVMF) and The Iams Company, to help you avoid having to leave your animals stranded in the event of a disaster or an evacuation.

Visit [www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org) for the most current information and for links to additional Web sites.



Photo courtesy  
of HSUS



## PREPAREDNESS BEFORE THE DISASTER

### Do Not Wait Until It Is Too Late

Countless times people have been told to leave their homes for a “short time,” only to find that they cannot return for days or weeks. Even disasters like gas leaks and minor flooding can keep you from tending to your animals for extended periods of time. To prevent situations such as these **TAKE YOUR ANIMALS WITH YOU**.

It is best to be overly cautious during a disaster warning. Preparing ahead of time and acting quickly is the best way to keep you and your family, including your animals, out of danger.

- Setup an appointment to talk to your **veterinarian** about planning for your animals during disasters.
- Assemble an animal **evacuation kit** (some suggestions follow, but this should be discussed between you and your veterinarian).
- Familiarize yourself with each type of disaster that your area could be affected by, including a hazardous materials spill.
- Develop an evacuation plan for all of your animals.
- Keep written directions to your home near your telephone. This will help you tell emergency responders how to get to your home if you are in a state of panic and in need of rescue, or if a person unfamiliar with your area is the only person in your home during a disaster.
- Identify alternate sources of food and water. Some local food and water sources may be disrupted or contaminated for extended periods of time following a disaster.
- Have backup generators for use in food-animal production operations.
- Keep all vehicles well maintained and full of gas.
- Keep emergency cash on hand.

### In Case You Are Not At Home

Preplace stickers on front and back house doors, barn doors, and pasture entrances to notify neighbors, fire fighters, police, and other rescue personnel that animals are on your property and where to find your evacuation supplies. Provide a list near your evacuation supplies of the number, type, and location of your animals, noting favorite hiding spots, in order to save precious rescue time.

To facilitate a successful rescue, provide muzzles, handling gloves, catchnets, and animal restraints where rescue personnel can find them. Keep in mind that animals may become fractious when frightened.

Designate a willing neighbor to tend to your animals in the event that a disaster occurs when you are not at home. This person should have a key to your home, be familiar with your animals, know your evacuation procedures, and know where your evacuation supplies are kept. It is suggested that you sign a letter that releases your neighbor from responsibility should one of your animals become injured and sign a veterinary medical treatment authorization form.

## Identification

Having identification on your animals, including rabies and license tags, if applicable, will help reunite you with your animal(s) in the event that you are separated. Identification should provide your name, home address, a phone number where you can be reached, and an out-of-state phone number of someone that you will be in contact with during or soon after the disaster/evacuation. If possible, include your veterinarian's name, location, and phone number. Forms of identification are listed below.

### Equine/Livestock

- microchip
- tattoo
- ear tag
- halter tag
- neck chain
- ear notches
- leg band
- brand
- mane clip
- luggage tag braided into tail or mane
- clipper-shaved information in the animals' hair
- livestock marking crayon, non-toxic, non-water-soluble spray paint, or magic markers to write on the animals' side
- permanent marker to mark hooves

### Small Animal

- collar tag (a piece of tape applied to the back of the collar tag can provide evacuation site information)
- microchip
- tattoo
- temporary neckband



## Transportation/Housing

It is important to separate animals from different households as much as possible and to maintain the best possible hygiene to decrease disease transmission.

### Small Animal:

Have a leash, collar, and/or harness for each pet. Have a collapsible cage or airline approved carrier for each pet, including proper bedding, for transportation or housing purposes. Familiarize your animals with evacuation procedures and cages/carriers. Take the cage/carrier out several times a year and put dog or cat treats inside with blankets and toys. By doing this, you will reinforce positive feelings associated with the animal carrier.



For housing purposes, cat carriers should be large enough to hold a small litter pan and two small dishes and still allow your cat enough room to lie down comfortably or stand to use the litter pan. Dog kennels or collapsible cages should be large enough to hold two nonspill bowls and still allow enough room for your dog to stand and turn around. For added assurance, clearly label each carrier with your identification and contact information.

Owning enough carriers to accommodate your pets facilitates a speedy evacuation and may mean the difference between the life and death of your pet.

Locate and **prearrange** an evacuation site for your family and animals outside your immediate area. Ideally, this will be a friend/relative or a pet-friendly hotel that is willing to let your family and animals stay in the event of a disaster. However, other possible animal housing options include veterinary hospitals, boarding kennels, and animal shelters.

### Equine/Livestock:

Equine/livestock evacuation can be challenging. Develop an evacuation plan and make sure that equine/livestock are familiar with being led into a trailer. Having a plan in place and practicing the plan prior to a disaster will help you accomplish a successful evacuation and maintain the safety of your animals.

Locate and **prearrange** an evacuation site for your animals outside your immediate area. Possible sites include veterinary or land grant colleges, racetracks, show grounds, pastures, stables, fairgrounds, equestrian centers, livestock corrals, stockyards, or other boarding facilities.

If you do not have enough trailers to transport all of your animals to an evacuation site quickly, contact neighbors, local haulers, farmers, producers, or other transportation providers to establish a network of available and reliable resources that will provide transportation in the event of a disaster.

## Veterinary Records

Make photocopies of important veterinary documents to store in the evacuation kit.

### Vaccination records

- Vaccination type and date
- Rabies certificate, if applicable

### Medical history

- Important test results (Felv/FIV, Heartworm, Coggins, TB, other infectious diseases)
- Medical conditions



## Proof of Ownership

Make copies of registration information, adoption papers, proof of purchase, and microchip information to store in the evacuation kit. List each one of your animals and their species, breed, age, sex, color, and distinguishing characteristics.

Keep current photographs of your animals in the evacuation kit for identification purposes. Include yourself in some of the photos to help you reclaim your lost animal(s). Consider preparing laminated “Lost Pet” signs with your animal’s photo attached, your name, and your contact information to use in case your animal is lost.



## List of Important Emergency Contacts

Prepare this list now before a disaster strikes. Include addresses and 24-hour contact numbers, if available. These contacts can be used by rescue personnel responding to a disaster affecting your animals or by you during a disaster or an evacuation. Keep one copy near your telephone and one copy in your animal evacuation kit.

- Numbers where you may be reached (pager, cell phone, work phone)
- Your **prearranged** evacuation site
- Local contact person in case of emergency when you are not available
- Out-of-state contact person in case the disaster is far reaching in your locale
- Your veterinarian
- Alternate veterinarian (30-90 miles away, provides boarding)
- Boarding facility (local)
- Boarding facility (30-90 miles away)
- Hotels that allow pets (90 mile radius)
- Local Animal Control
- Local Police Department
- Local Fire Department
- Local Public Health Department
- Local Animal Shelter
- Local Red Cross Chapter
- Local Humane Society
- Local Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA)
- United States Department of Agriculture Missing Pet Network ([www.missingpet.net](http://www.missingpet.net))

### *Additional contacts for equine/livestock owners:*

- State veterinarian
- State veterinary colleges or land grant colleges of agriculture
- Private stables/farms
- Racetracks
- Fairgrounds
- Show grounds
- Stockyards
- Equestrian centers
- Local haulers or neighbors to help with transportation
- Feed distributor



## Evacuation Essentials

The following lists will help you prepare for your animal(s) in the event of a disaster. The evacuation kit should be assembled in an easy-to-carry, waterproof container. It should be stored in an easily accessible location away from areas with temperature extremes. Replace the food, water, and medications as often as needed to maintain their quality and freshness and in accordance with the expiration dates. Indicate, if needed, medications that are stored elsewhere due to temperature requirements such as refrigeration.

Consult your veterinarian for advice on making an animal evacuation kit and first aid kit that is appropriate for your individual animals. It is important that you become familiar with the items in your kit and their uses. Your veterinarian may recommend an animal first aid book to include in your kit. Consult your veterinarian regarding emergency first aid procedures and administration of any medications.

### Small Animal Evacuation Kit

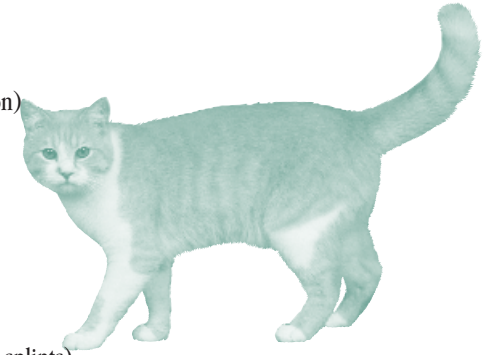
- 2-week supply of food (dry & canned)
- 2-week supply of water in plastic gallon jugs
- Batteries (flashlight, radio)
- Cage/carrier (for each animal, labeled with your contact information)
- Can opener (manual)
- Cat/wildlife gloves
- Copies of veterinary records and proof of ownership
- Emergency contact list
- Familiar items to make pets feel comfortable (favorite toys, treats, blankets)
- First aid kit (see next page)
- Flashlight
- Instructions
  - Diet: Record the diet for each individual animal, including what **not** to feed in case of allergies.
  - Medications: List each animal separately, including dose and frequency for each medication. Provide veterinary and pharmacy contact information for refills.
- Leash, collar, harness (for each animal)
- Litter, litter pan, litter scoop
- Maps of local area and alternate evacuation routes (in case of road closures)
- Muzzles (dog or cat)
- Newspaper (bedding, litter)
- Nonspill food and water dishes
- Paper towels
- Radio (solar and battery operated)
- Spoon (canned food)
- Stakes and tie-outs
- Trash bags



### Small Animal First Aid Kit

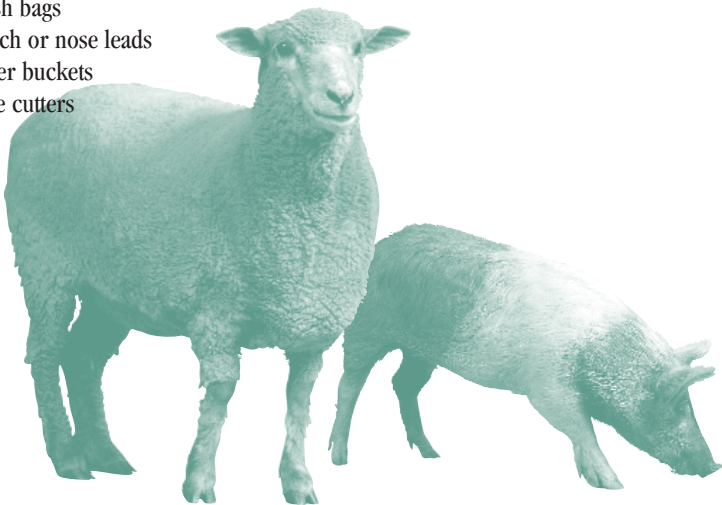
Consult your veterinarian when developing the first aid kit. The items below serve only as an example of what may be included in a small animal first aid kit.

- Activated charcoal (liquid)
- Antidiarrheal liquid or tablets
- Antibiotic ointment (wounds)
- Antibiotic eye ointment
- Bandage scissors
- Bandage tape
- Betadine or Nolvasan (scrub and solution)
- Cotton bandage rolls
- Cotton-tipped swabs
- Elastic bandage rolls
- Eye rinse (sterile)
- Flea and tick prevention and treatment
- Gauze pads and rolls
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Ice cream sticks (which may be used as splints)
- Isopropyl alcohol/alcohol prep pads
- Latex gloves or non-allergenic gloves
- Liquid dish detergent (mild wound and body cleanser)
- Measuring spoons
- Medications and preventatives such as heartworm prevention (clearly-labeled instructions)
- Nonadherent bandage pads
- Saline solution (for rinsing wounds)
- Sterile lubricant (waterbased)
- Styptic powder (clotting agent)
- Syringe or eyedropper
- Thermometer (digital)
- Tourniquet
- Towel and washcloth
- Tweezers



## Equine/Livestock Evacuation Kit

- 3-7 day supply of food and water
- Bandannas (blind folds)
- Batteries (flashlight, radio)
- Blankets
- Copies of veterinary records and proof of ownership
- Duct tape
- Emergency contact list
- First aid kit (see next page)
- Flashlight
- Fly spray
- Heavy gloves (leather)
- Hoof knife
- Hoof nippers
- Hoof pick
- Hoof rasp
- Instructions
  - Diet: Record the diet for your animals.
  - Medications: Record dose and frequency for each medication. Provide veterinary and pharmacy contact information for refills.
- Knife (sharp, all-purpose)
- Leg wraps
- Maps of local area and alternate evacuation routes (in case of road closures)
- Nonnylon halters and leads (leather/cotton)
- Paper towels
- Plastic trash cans with lids (can be used to store water)
- Radio (solar and battery operated)
- Rope or lariat
- Shovel
- Tarpaulins
- Trash bags
- Twitch or nose leads
- Water buckets
- Wire cutters



## Equine/Livestock First Aid Kit

Consult your veterinarian when developing the first aid kit. The items below serve only as an example of what may be included in a large animal first aid kit.

- Antibiotic ointment (wounds)
- Antibiotic eye ointment
- Bandage scissors
- Bandage tape
- Betadine or Nolvasan (scrub and solution)
- Cotton bandage rolls
- Cotton-tipped swabs
- Elastic bandage rolls
- Eye rinse (sterile)
- Flea and tick treatment
- Gauze pads and rolls
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Isopropyl alcohol/alcohol prep pads
- Latex gloves or non-allergenic gloves
- Medications (clearly labeled instructions)
- Mineral oil (quantity sufficient to begin colic treatment-consult a veterinarian)
- Nonadherent bandage pads
- Saline solution (for rinsing wounds)
- Sterile lubricant (water-based)
- Thermometer (digital)
- Tincture of green soap
- Tourniquet
- Towel and washcloth
- Tweezers



## Evacuating Other Types of Pets

Identification, medical records, and proof of ownership are equally as important for other kinds of pets as for the aforementioned animals. Transportation may require additional attention and care in order to decrease chances of stress-induced illness and death. It is important to keep pets from different sources as separate as possible and maintain the best possible hygiene in order to decrease disease transmission.

### Birds


Transportation of pet birds is best accomplished using small and secure covered carriers to avoid injury. If traveling in cold weather, always warm the interior of your vehicle before moving your bird(s) from the house to the vehicle. Transfer your bird(s) to a standard cage upon arrival at the evacuation site; covering the cage may reduce stress. Bird transfer should occur in a small, enclosed room to reduce the risk of escape. Birds should be kept in quiet areas and not allowed out of the cage in unfamiliar surroundings. Give fresh food and water daily. In addition to the pertinent items listed under *small animal evacuation kit*, include



necessary dietary supplements, a plant mister for cooling birds in hot weather, a hot water bottle for warming birds in cold weather, paper towels to line the bottom of the cage, a cage perch, and toys. If your bird appears to be ill, be sure to lower the cage perch, food dish, and water bowl and consult a veterinarian as soon as possible.

### Amphibians

Transportation of amphibians can be accomplished by using water-tight plastic bags, such as the ones used for pet fish transport, or plastic containers, such as plastic shoeboxes or plastic food containers with snap-on lids. It is best to place only one species or if possible only one specimen per container. Small ventilation holes should be placed in the upper wall or plastic lid. Sand the inner surface of the holes smooth to prevent injury to the animal.



For terrestrial or semiaquatic amphibians use a tiny amount of water, or moistened paper towels, foam rubber, or moss as a suitable substrate. For totally aquatic species, fill the plastic bag one third full of water, then inflate the bag with fresh air and close with a knot or rubber band. It is best to use water the animal was living in to minimize physiologic stress.

Care must be taken to monitor water and air temperature, humidity, lighting, and nutrition during the time that the animal will be in the evacuation facility. Housing at the evacuation facility should be consistent with that required by the amphibian. The enclosure should, if possible, be placed in a controlled environment, away from areas of heavy traffic, loud noises, and vibrations. Make sure that the container housing the amphibian is escape proof. Nonetheless, plan for escapes.

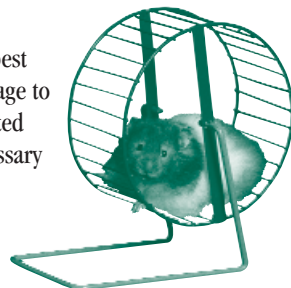
### Reptiles

Transportation of small pet reptiles can be accomplished using a pillowcase, cloth sack, or small transport carrier. Transfer your pet to a secure cage at the evacuation site as soon as possible. In addition to the pertinent items listed under *small animal evacuation kit*, include essential dietary supplements, water bowl for soaking, spray bottle for misting, heating pad, battery-operated heating lamp or other appropriate heat source, extra batteries, and appropriate handling gloves/supplies.



### Other Small Animals

Transportation of most small mammals (ferrets, hamsters, gerbils, rats, mice, guinea pigs, etc.) is best accomplished using a secure, covered carrier or cage to reduce stress. In addition to the pertinent items listed under *small animal evacuation kit*, include necessary dietary supplements, extra bedding materials, and appropriate exercise equipment.



## AN EVACUATION ORDER HAS BEEN ISSUED ... NOW WHAT DO YOU DO?

Evacuate your family, including your animals, as early as possible. By leaving early, you will decrease the chance of becoming victims of the disaster.

1. Bring your dogs, cats, and other small animals indoors.
2. Make sure all animals have collars and some form of identification securely fastened.
3. Place all small pets, including cats and small dogs, inside individual transportable carriers. When stressed, animals that normally get along may become aggressive towards each other.
4. Secure leashes on all large dogs.
5. Load your larger animal cages/carriers into your vehicle. These will serve as temporary housing for your animals if needed.
6. Load the animal evacuation kit and supplies into your vehicle.
7. Call your prearranged animal evacuation site to confirm availability of space.
8. Implement your equine/livestock evacuation plan.
9. Evacuate with your animals—ASAP!
10. If you must leave equine/livestock behind, relocate them to a predetermined safe place based on the type of imminent disaster. Ensure that they have access to hay or an appropriate and safe free choice food source, clean water, a safe living area or high ground above flood levels. Some types of disasters require leaving animals inside while others require leaving animals outside (visit [www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org) for links to large animal disaster planning Web sites). Do not rely on automatic watering systems, because power may be lost.
11. If time permits, secure or remove all outdoor objects that may turn into dangerous flying debris.

## AFTER THE DISASTER

- Survey the area inside and outside your home to identify sharp objects, dangerous materials, dangerous wildlife, contaminated water, downed power lines, or other hazards.
- Familiar scents and landmarks may have changed, and this can confuse your animals.
- Release equine/livestock in safe and enclosed areas only.
- Release cats, dogs, and other small animals indoors only. They could encounter dangerous wildlife and debris if they are allowed outside unsupervised and unrestrained.
- Release birds and reptiles only if necessary and only when they are calm and in an enclosed room.
- Reintroduce food in small servings, gradually working up to full portions if animals have been without food for a prolonged period of time.
- Allow uninterrupted rest/sleep for all animals to recover from the trauma and stress.
- Physically check animal control and animal shelters DAILY for lost animals.
- Post lost animal notices and notify local veterinarians and your neighbors of any lost animals (visit [www.missingpet.net](http://www.missingpet.net) for lost and found animals).

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## The American Veterinary Medical Association

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The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding in May 1993 with the Office of Emergency Preparedness of the U.S. Public Health Service. With this memorandum, the AVMA formed Veterinary Medical Assistance Teams (VMAT) that became incorporated into the Federal Response Plan for disaster relief as part of the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS). In 1994, the AVMA signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the United States Department of Agriculture forming a partnership during foreign animal disease outbreaks and emerging animal diseases. In 1998, the AVMA and the American Veterinary Medical Foundation signed a Statement of Understanding with the American Red Cross recognizing the American Veterinary Medical Association and the American Veterinary Medical Foundation as the only national organizations representing the entire profession of licensed veterinarians solely responsible for the diagnosis, treatment, health and well-being of all animals, including during periods designated as disaster relief.



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## The American Veterinary Medical Foundation

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The American Veterinary Medical Foundation (AVMF) is a 501(c)(3) foundation that raises and disburses funds for initiatives supporting veterinary care, veterinary education, and veterinary practice. Founded in 1963, contributions made to the AVMF are tax deductible. The AVMF Disaster Relief Emergency Fund provides support for emergency aid for the health, safety, and welfare of animals affected by disasters, emergency preparedness, and the Veterinary Medical Assistance Teams.



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## Veterinary Medical Assistance Teams

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Some disasters create a need for additional veterinary assistance. The Veterinary Medical Assistance Teams (VMAT) treat animals that are affected by or injured in disasters when the local veterinary community is overwhelmed. They are deployed when their assistance is requested by state or local officials and authorized by federal authorities.



The VMAT consist of veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and support personnel who are capable of responding within 24-48 hours of notification. The VMAT are capable of addressing veterinary and public health issues associated with a disaster, and they can establish a field veterinary hospital if requested to do so. They coordinate the animal relief efforts in cooperation with emergency management, the state veterinarian, state and local veterinary medical associations, state and local officials, the local veterinary community, animal control officials, and the responding humane organizations. They operate as part of the Federal Response Plan when activated by the U.S. Public Health Service, the agency responsible for developing the medical response component for the National Disaster Medical System.

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## Contact & Contribution Information

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*For additional information about the AVMA disaster relief efforts:*

**AVMA**  
**1931 N. Meacham Rd., Suite 100**  
**Schaumburg, IL 60173-4360**  
**847/925-8070, ext. 261**  
**[www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org)**

*To contribute to the AVMF Disaster Relief Emergency Fund, please contact:*

**AVMF Disaster Relief Emergency Fund**  
**1931 N. Meacham Road, Suite 100**  
**Schaumburg, IL 60173-4360**  
**847/925-8070, ext. 600**  
**[www.avmf.org](http://www.avmf.org)**

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## Acknowledgements

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The AVMA would like to thank The Iams Company for its generous support of AVMA disaster relief initiatives.



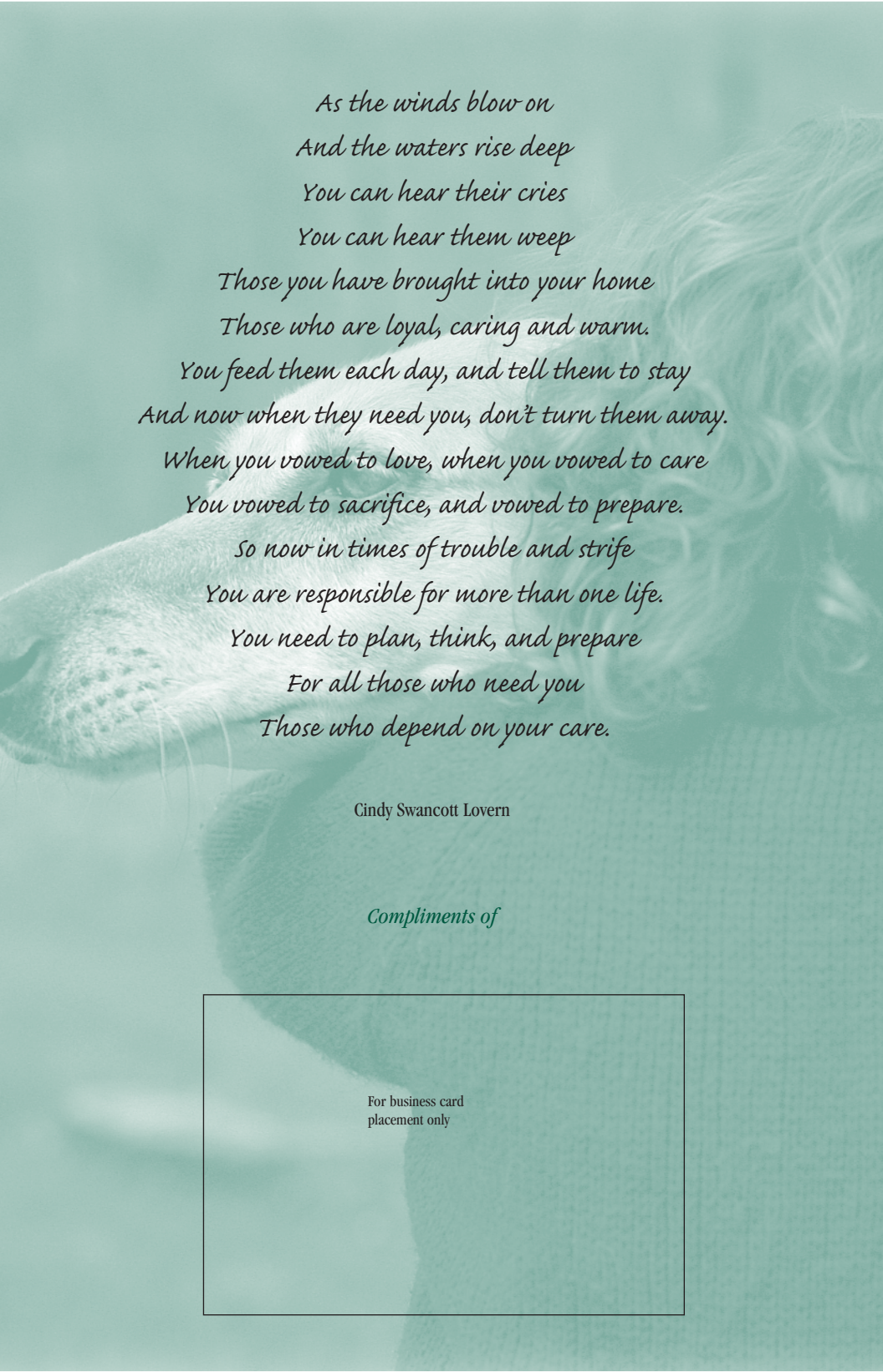
The AVMA would also like to thank the AVMF for its continued support of AVMA disaster relief efforts.

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*Graphic Design by Leslie Arendt, Cheryl Schmidt, Sarah Jurecka*



*As the winds blow on  
And the waters rise deep  
You can hear their cries  
You can hear them weep  
Those you have brought into your home  
Those who are loyal, caring and warm.  
You feed them each day, and tell them to stay  
And now when they need you, don't turn them away.  
When you vowed to love, when you vowed to care  
You vowed to sacrifice, and vowed to prepare.  
So now in times of trouble and strife  
You are responsible for more than one life.  
You need to plan, think, and prepare  
For all those who need you  
Those who depend on your care.*

Cindy Swancott Lovern

*Compliments of*

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