



Community of Hillsborough Animal and Agricultural Response Team (CHAART)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, August 13, 2008

National Homeless Animals Day: CHAART Observes By Preparing For Pets

- National Homeless Animals Day
- Pet-Shelter Disaster Drill and Volunteer Sign-up
- Saturday, August 16th -- 10:00 a.m. - 12 noon
- Burnett Middle School Burnett (1010 N. Kingsway Road, Seffner)

It's back-to-school and the height of storm season. In recognition of National Homeless Animals Day, Hillsborough County Animal Services and CHAART (Community of Hillsborough Animal & Agricultural Response Team) are mobilizing residents and volunteers for the protection of pets during disasters.

Disaster preparedness has increased on a national level, and pets rely on humans for their needs. Hillsborough County Animal Services deployed to Mississippi for rescue and recovery following Hurricane Katrina, and prior to that event, a temporary animal shelter was erected east of Tampa for pets lost during Hurricane Charley.

Hillsborough County currently has two approved pet-friendly evacuation shelters: Sickles High School in Tampa, and Burnett Middle School in Seffner. An earlier practice drill took place in June at the Sickles High location.

In recognition of National Homeless Animals Day, Hillsborough County Animal Services and CHAART volunteers will conduct sign-in and pet-sheltering procedures such as those performed during actual disasters. New recruits are welcome to attend, but pets should not be brought to the practice drill. Volunteers will be trained by experienced animal professionals. Information about pet-preparedness will be available, and a pet-evacuation kit complete with micro-chip ID will be on display for interested pet owners.

During an actual disaster, pets will be signed in on a first-come/first-served basis for citizens also taking shelter on site. Drop-off pet boarding is not permitted, and advance reservations are not accepted.

Having a disaster or hurricane plan is vital. If evacuated, please don't leave pets at home to fend for themselves! Prepare the following now:

- Proof of current rabies vaccination for dogs, cats, and ferrets
- Pet ID securely fastened on each animal
- A sturdy carrier large enough for the animal to stand up and turn around inside
- Minimum 3-day supply (per pet) of food, water, medicine and waste removal
- If your pet is not already micro-chipped, talk to your family veterinarian.

Remember, a public shelter is not a resort - it's your last resort! Call friends, family, hotels, or boarding facilities now for options on sheltering your family and pets.

For more information about preparedness or to volunteer, please call 813.744-5660 or log onto www.hillsboroughcounty.org.