

Emergency Preparedness: Don't Leave Fido Behind!

By Sophie Braccini

Contra Costa County Animal Services set up shop with their first response van at the Moraga Community Faire last weekend, offering micro-chipping for many of Lamorinda's four-legged residents.

Micro-chips help reunite lost pets with their families. There are more than 32,000 pets in Lamorinda, and the diversity of animals that live with us is amazing; amphibians, birds, snakes, horses, pocket pets, fish and of course, our cats and dogs.

A local group, the Pet Emergency Preparedness (PEP) team, urges pet owners to include pets in their emergency preparedness plans.

During the Katrina catastrophe only one in sixty animals were saved. In case of an emergency, a large majority of pet owners refuse to leave their pets behind during an evacuation.

"That's the right thing to do," says Linda Swanson of PEP, "that's what we learned from the wild fire of 2007; pet owners need to take their animals with them."

Having your pet micro-chipped is an important component of an emergency plan. Your earthquake kit should include supplies for your pet. There should be enough food and water to last Fido for two weeks, just like other family members. Assemble a pet first aid kit (Contra Costa County PEP, cccpep.org, sells one for \$20). The kit should include at a minimum antibiotic ointment, bandage rolls, eye rinse, latex gloves, thermometer



Beagle "Rosie" gets her micro-chip at the Community Faire

Photo Andy Scheck

and tweezers. In addition to a crate or means of securing your pet in an evacuation, your supplies should include your pet's medical records (with proof of vaccination), current photos of you with your pet and an emergency contact list. Make arrangements with a trusted neighbor to take your pets and meet you at a specific location in case you aren't home when disaster strikes. Be sure the person is comfortable with your pets.

When you evacuate with your pet, you will need to find shelter with your animal. As of today, Red Cross shelters do not admit animals. In the Lamorinda area, Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers operate Red Cross shelters; they might have a different view about animals. In fact, CERT

coordinators who were at a recent PEP training session said they would include animals in future rescue simulations that are regularly practiced by CERT volunteers. During evacuation periods it is not rare to see hotels that usually do not admit pets, loosen their rules.

If you practice emergency evacuation with your family, include your pets. PEP's Frans Hoffman recommends crating your pets first if you know you will have to evacuate since they sense your nervousness and may become less manageable.

Our towns have signed contracts called "Memoranda of Understanding" (MOU) with diverse groups and companies to provide shelter, food and assistance in case of emergency. PEP would like to see similar agree-

ments signed with non-profit animal rescue organizations such as Noah's Wish or Best Friends.

Hoffman says the Moraga Orinda Fire District has been trained in large animal rescue and that adequate equipment is stocked in the local trucks. PEP has secured the initial financing of a first response van that will be stationed in Moraga. It contains a generator, cages, cleaning and medical supplies.

PEP is currently looking for funding and volunteers. For more information and/or to join the PEP team in Contra Costa, go to: <http://www.cccpep.org/>.