

Caring for Dogs under Evacuation, Stress, Transitions

Traumatic events: natural disasters, changing of homes or upheaval in the home life can make normally stable pets present unexpected and uncharacteristic behaviors. Most of these behaviors are the result of fear and stress. Some animals can become more anxious during periods of major disruptions of their life routines.

Here are some ideas on helping your pet survive *emotionally*, through this time:

- Keep a close eye on your dog. Manage their environment well. This is a good time to revisit the use of crates. Crates are your dog's safe space or den. This is especially important if you are staying in temporary lodging or even new lodging.
- Once you are in your new safe place, make sure you are providing your dog time to explore their new surroundings. A fenced yard and leashed walks around the new neighborhood. Give your dog plenty of opportunity to "sniff" the neighborhood.
- Provide familiar foods and treats. Now is not the time to upend their diets.
- Provide familiar bedding and toys. If that is not possible, infuse these new items with your scent by placing your worn tee shirt on the bedding. You are familiar to your pet and the presence of your scent will provide them comfort.
- Allow your pet time to rest and get used to their new environment. A quiet place away from the coming and goings of people they do not know.
- Keep your pets' routines. Predictable schedules provide comfort to anxious animals, especially dogs, who appreciate expected walks, feedings, person time and training time.
- You are under stress, but try very hard to keep cool around your pet. All animals are sensitive to the moods of their people and the stress hormones emitted by their favorite person. Self-care allows you to better care for your pet.
- Keep in contact with your veterinary care provider. They may be able to provide temporary pharmaceutical help during the stressful transition.
- Seek out doggie day care or short term boarding situations if that provides relief for the pet owner. This may cause more stress on the animal if that is an unfamiliar undertaking. Another option is to contact friends your pet knows to provide temporary care.
- Contact the Sonoma Humane Society Behavior and Training Department to schedule a dog behavior consultation to get additional information on managing your dog's behavior: 707-542-0882 X263

