

Safety Planning for Pets in Domestic Violence

Statistics show that up to 65% of domestic violence victims are unable to escape their abusive partners because they are concerned about what will happen to their pets when they leave. Animals that are left behind are at *high risk for being severely harmed*. Fortunately, there are more and more resources in place to assist with this difficult situation.

If you are creating a safety plan of your own to leave an abusive relationship, safety planning for your pets is important as well. If possible, do not leave pets alone with an abusive partner. If you are planning to leave, talk to friends, family or your veterinarian about temporary care for your pet.

The Animal Welfare Institute developed the Safe Havens Mapping Project, an integrated and comprehensive state-by-state listing of sheltering services for the animals of domestic violence victims. Safe havens operate differently from community to community relying on foster networks, humane societies and veterinarians. In some cases, domestic violence shelters house victims and pets together.

Create a Safety Plan that Includes Your Pet

If you are planning to stay...

- Keep emergency provisions for your pet in case your abuser withholds money
- Keep the phone number of the nearest 24-hour emergency veterinary clinic
- Establish ownership of your pet by creating a paper trail (e.g. obtain a license, have veterinarian records put in your name, have microchip placed or info on microchip changed to your name)

If you are planning to leave...

- Obtain safe emergency shelter for pet, somewhere that will not be disclosed to your abuser (e.g. veterinarian, friend, family, a safe haven for pets program)
- Establish ownership of your pet by creating a paper trail (e.g. obtain a license, have veterinarian records put in your name). Ideally visit the veterinarian prior to leaving and have a microchip placed or info on microchip changed to your name
- Pack a bag for your pet that includes:
 - Food and medicine
 - Documents of ownership (receipts from adoption or purchase of pet, license to establish ownership, receipts for animal purchases, microchip paperwork)
 - Health documents (veterinary or vaccination records)
 - ID and rabies tag info, if a dog or cat (these will also help establish ownership)
 - Leash, carrier, toys, bedding
- *If you must leave without your pet, remember to leave enough food, litter, etc. for your pet

If you have left...

- Keep pets indoors and do not let the pets outside alone
- Pick a safe route and time to walk your pet. Do not exercise/walk pet alone
- Change your veterinarian
- If you are getting a protective order, Texas allows pets to be included in that order and police can assist in removal of the pet if he/she was left behind

Important Resources:

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 / 1-800-727-3224 (TTY)

Online chat: www.thehotline.org

<http://www.awionline.org/safe-havens>

Sources: Animal Welfare Institute, National Domestic Violence Hotline