

Should Hotels and Motels Welcome Pets in Disasters?

Pet issues are people issues

- 40 percent of homes have a dog, 30 percent have a cat and most have more than one pet.
- Some people won't evacuate or will delay their evacuation if they can't take their pets with them.
- Leaving pets behind is not an option. If it's dangerous for people, it's dangerous for their pets.

Advantages of having people and pets together

- In a mass evacuation, pet friendly public shelters may fill up.
- Keeping people with their pets has the following benefits.
- Owners can feed, exercise and clean up after their pets.
- Many pets do better with owners taking care of them.
- Pet-only shelters are labor-intensive, and adequate staff and volunteers may not be available in a large evacuation.

Prepare for pets

- Establish rules for pet owners.
- Must provide food and water.
- Must confine and control pets.
- Cannot be abusive to animals.
- Provide an area for pets to relieve themselves and exercise.
- Work with animal shelters, the Humane Society and other local groups.
- Put your establishment's name on a list of hotels and motels that are pet friendly in disasters.
- Ask animal organizations if they have a supply of crates, bowls, leashes and so on.
- Animal organization may have access to emergency supplies of pet food.
- Call pet or wildlife organizations for help if a customer has an exotic pet that you believe would be dangerous or inappropriate.

Keep guests informed

- Inform your guests that you allow pets since some people are uncomfortable around animals or have allergies to them.

Benefits of Becoming Pet Friendly

Adapted from bringyourpet.com

When deciding whether to become pet friendly, property owners simply need to look to the bottom line: pet friendly properties enjoy a larger client base, more frequent visits, longer stays, increased brand loyalty and justifiable compensation for wear and tear on properties by means of pet deposits and other fees.

According to the Humane Society of the United States, the benefits of offering short- or long-term pet friendly lodging, are the following:

You'll attract more potential residents — A pet friendly policy will increase the marketability of your property.

- You'll increase the average length of occupancy — Once pet owners find a property that welcomes their pets, they are likely to stay longer than guests without pets.
- You'll foster goodwill — Research has proven time and again the benefits people get from sharing their lives with pets. Allowing pets on your property will not only help your guests but also will help you and your company by generating a positive public image.
- You'll have more responsible guests — Because pet owners know that pet friendly accommodations are scarce, responsible pet owners generally strive to abide by all rules, even those not related to pets.

This fact sheet was prepared by the University of Florida Extension Service and the Florida State Agricultural Response Team (SART), which is a group of agencies dedicated to effectively communicating and planning for animals and agriculture in disasters.

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