

# OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY

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**PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Five ways to protect your pet in stormy weather**

We love our furry family members as much as our own children, but sometimes we don't know how to protect them when stormy weather threatens. Dr. Alicia Gorczyca-Southerland, staff veterinarian at the Oklahoma Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, recommends these five things pet owners should do to calm and care for animals if you live where violent storms may occur.

1. Practice taking your pets into your storm shelter. Cats and small dogs should be in pet carriers. Larger dogs should get plenty of practice, and plenty of rewards, for going up and down steps into shelter. Be sure to practice when the weather is dry and sunny instead of waiting until a dog is nervous about the weather.
2. Identify your pets with collars that have name tags and/or rabies vaccine tags attached. The name tag should give basic contact information so emergency personnel can get in touch with you.
3. Microchip all pets. This simple procedure can be done in any vet's office and will place a small microchip just under the animal's skin. Emergency personnel will scan the animal to read the chip and get the owner's information from a database.
4. Prepare an emergency kit for your pet. This kit should include a small first aid kit, a food bowl, a 3-day supply of your pet's food, water, a spare collar, a leash and the pet's favorite toy.
5. Have a first aid kit for your pet. One of the most common wounds that can occur on our pets are injuries to the paw pads from storm debris. Your kit should include very basic items like antibiotic ointment, cotton balls, and flexible bandaging material. Your family veterinarian can help you design a kit specific to your pets.

"The most important thing I can tell you is to make sure your dog or cat wears a collar with a name tag and has a microchip," said Dr. Gorczyca-Southerland.

Questions and concerns about caring for animals in emergencies may be directed to Dr. Alicia Gorczyca-Southerland at 405-522-6136.

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**Photo caption:** Dr. Alicia Gorczyca-Southerland helps children create bags to contain items their pets will need if they are staying in a storm shelter.