

Relief to Reach Pet Victims of Wildfires

Emergency supplies bound for Northern California include bedding, bowls for animals.

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Cat and dog victims of the Northern California wildfires are expected to get some relief this weekend after the arrival of a rescue truck loaded with pet supplies.

On Friday, PetSmart Charities deployed its Phoenix-based Emergency Relief Waggin' stocked with an estimated \$50,000 worth of supplies. The semi-trailer departed from the Phoenix distribution center, bound for Oroville, Calif., and is scheduled to arrive Saturday.

More than 500 companion animals are being housed in two temporary shelters in the fire zone – one at a high school in Oroville and another at a church in the city of Chico, 23 miles northwest of Oroville.

Susana Della Maddalena, vice president and executive director of PetSmart Charities, said the nonprofit organization received a request for assistance from Butte County Animal Control in Northern California.

"Disaster situations such as this one are the very reason that we created our Emergency Relief Waggin' program in 2007," she said. "Its purpose is to assist the animal victims of natural and manmade disasters."

About 40 lightning-sparked wildfires during the past two weeks have charred more than 76 square miles in Butte County, according to The Associated Press. By Thursday, there were about 15 active fires.

"Many of these animals evacuated with their families at a moment's notice, so the need for items such as bowls, bedding, crates, leashes, litterboxes, kitty litter, and other basic supplies is great," Della Maddalena said. "In addition, the Emergency Relief Waggin' has supplies on board that will assist the human responders in operating the temporary animal shelters, including an air conditioning unit, a generator, and lights."