

Dogs and Cats Flood Louisiana Shelter

Volunteers are watching over more than 1,000 displaced dogs, cats, birds, and reptiles.

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Photos courtesy IFAWPet evacuation procedures were in full swing early this week at a temporary animal shelter in the northwest city of Shreveport, La., to assist the displaced residents of New Orleans and other parts of southern Louisiana hit by Hurricane Gustav.

The Louisiana State Fairgrounds served as a mega-shelter, where teams from International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), the Animal Rescue League of Boston, and other groups are watching over more than 1,000 cats, dogs, birds, and reptiles, according to Colleen Cullen of IFAW. She said animals are expected to be reunited with their owners by Friday.

The first animals arrived Saturday night, and included a cat named Lady and a cat named Sheba, as well as numerous puppies bewildered by the sudden move, IFAW reported Tuesday. Pet owners are responsible for feeding, cleaning cages, and walking their dogs or cats for the duration of their stay in the fairgrounds; most of the owners are housed in a sports stadium near the shelter.

Other agencies taking part in the rescue efforts include the American Humane Association and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. American Humane's fleet of animal emergency services vehicles, including its 82-foot-long Rescue Rig, is stationed outside the expected area of hurricane impact until the storm passes.

"The state and the responding organizations are applying the lessons learned from those storms, and their aftermath, to increase the effectiveness of these evacuations and, most importantly, the safety of the people and their pets," said Debrah Schnackenberg of American Humane.