

Groups in Texas Rescue Pets Stranded by Ike

Animal disaster response teams work to save pets in the wake of hurricane.

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Local and national animal welfare groups are working together in Texas to rescue cats and dogs stranded by Hurricane Ike.

Since last week, disaster teams have been in Nacogdoches, Texas, to help keep animals safe from the hurricane's path, including the Humane Society of the United States, North Shore Animal League America, International Fund for Animal Welfare, and American Humane Association.

American Humane has deployed its Red Star Animal Emergency Services team and equipment to Texas to assist with search-and-rescue and sheltering operations for pets affected by Ike. The organization deployed Saturday to Beaumont at the request of the Texas State Animal Response Team and the Texas Animal Health Commission.

IFAW, which played a vital role in safeguarding the lives of more than 1,300 animals in Louisiana affected by Hurricane Gustav, has been designated as the water rescue operations team in the Lake Charles region, at the Louisiana-Texas border, where the water surge was expected to reach 8 feet, according to spokesman Mike Booth. He said IFAW is equipped with an animal rescue trailer funded by Petfinder.com Foundation.

Petfinder.com, an online database of adoptable pets, also launched its "Power of Paws" program Monday to help shelters and rescue groups across the United States prepare for natural disasters by donating more than \$1 million worth of generators. The Foundation, with support from Merial, the maker of Heartgard and Frontline brand products, is giving generators to eligible members that submit a grant application by Wednesday, Oct. 1.

An additional \$1 million in financial assistance was donated Monday by The Home Depot Foundation for Hurricane Ike recovery and rebuilding efforts.

The Animal League reported that animal shelters along the Texas coast have suffered serious damage, and as a result cats and dogs are being housed in temporary shelters. NSALA said it is transporting animals to its New York headquarters to help alleviate overcrowded conditions. Their 40-foot Mobile Rescue Unit arrived in Texas to provide relief to shelters in the affected areas.

Hurricane Ike comes on the heels of Gustav, as well as a West Virginia kennel rescue, where the Animal League rescued more than 120 dogs and adopted most into new homes, the organization said in a fundraising letter. "The dedicated members of our Emergency Response Team have been on round-the-clock call, as this is our third emergency response in the past three weeks," said J. John Stevenson, president of the Animal League.