

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(9/7/05)

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Humane Society of Berks County Expands Disaster Relief Programs and Continues Local Disaster Preparedness Efforts

The Humane Society of Berks County, Berks County's leader in animal welfare, announced today the expansion of the Society's existing relief programs aimed at pets and pet owners in need to include displaced victims of Hurricane Katrina who may be relocated to the Berks County area. "Our organization has always led the efforts locally to provide needed relief to the local victims of catastrophes, illness, and violence. We think it's important to also extend these services to victims of this national tragedy", said Humane Society executive director, Karel I. Minor.

The Humane Society of Berks County's (HSBC) existing emergency housing program, PetNet, and its pet food banking service will be expanded to assist pets of families who have been displaced to Berks County as a result of the hurricane. In addition to housing, pets will be provided with vaccinations, licenses, food, and needed pet supplies. "While our organization can't help the animals still trapped in the hurricane zone, we can help any who have made it to safety here" said Minor. The Humane Society is notifying governmental and non-governmental agencies of the available services and is encouraging anyone who is aware of an agency or individual in need to contact the HSBC immediately.

The HSBC is also moving forward with its coordination of the process to create the first Berks County Animal Response Team (Berks CART). The Berks CART is part of a statewide effort to bring together animal welfare organizations, veterinarians, first responder agencies, and volunteers to coordinate the efforts to rescue animals in the event of an emergency in Berks County. “I think Hurricane Katrina has made it clear to everyone that pets need to be taken into account when preparing for and dealing with the aftermath of a disaster”, said Minor. “We don’t want anyone to be injured or die unnecessarily in Berks County because they were given a choice of being rescued or abandoning their beloved pet, as was the case in New Orleans.”

The HSBC will be signing up volunteers for the Berks County Animal Response Team, as well as accepting donations of new pet supplies and unopened pet food to support its emergency programs, at its upcoming Walk for the Animals on September 17, in Heritage Park, Reading.

The Humane Society of Berks County serves all of Berks County and surrounding communities. It is a private, non-profit organization funded through donations and service fees. In addition to enforcing Pennsylvania’s animal cruelty laws, the Humane Society offers adoption services, spay and neuter services, humane education, pet behavioral counseling, and helps stray, injured and mistreated animals. More information about the shelter may be found at www.berkshumane.org or by calling 610-921-2348. The Humane Society is located at 1801 N. 11th Street, Reading.

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