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Letter to the Editor

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Pet Owners Risk Perception and Risk Communication in Disasters in Developing Countries

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Abstract

Disasters can cause great physical and financial damage to pet owners in developing countries. These effects lead to severe psychological side effects on individuals and families. With the tendency of families to keep pets in these countries, many challenges have arisen regarding how to manage these pets before, during, and after disasters. Therefore, mitigation, prevention, and preparedness measures for these families should be prioritized in the disaster management cycle to minimize psychological effects such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after losing pets.

Dear Editor

Disasters can cause great physical and financial damage to pet owners in developing countries.[1–3] These effects lead to severe psychological side effects on individuals and families.[4] With the tendency of families to keep pets in these countries, many challenges have arisen regarding how to manage these pets before, during, and after disasters.[5] The first challenge is the lack of legal basis for keeping pets. The second challenge is poor communication between pet owners and veterinarians for periodic pet check-ups. The third challenge is not having the necessary equipment, including an emergency kit and a carrier for pet owners. The fourth challenge is lack of proper disaster evacuation training which is the most important challenge that pet owners faced it. Finally, a proper shelter to be considered for pets during times of disaster.[6–8]

Recent studies have shown that leaving pets at home during disasters is both psychologically distressing for pet owners and morally unethical. Therefore, mitigation, prevention, and preparedness measures for these families should be prioritized in the disaster management cycle to minimize psychological effects such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after losing pets.[9,10]

Children and adults depend on their pets more than others. Therefore, they should be prioritized in disaster management planning.[11,12] For on-time and appropriate evacuation education during disasters, pet owners should receive proper training about pets evacuation with a cage or carrier and pets should receive training on how to enter their cage or carrier. Practicing these behaviors in predisaster conditions can make these habitual behaviors easier for pets and reduce the amount of stress for pet owners.[13] These exercises require pet owners to have a risk perception of their duties toward their pets. To increase the awareness of these people, mass media should be used and documentary films should be aired on television, which requires the cooperation of both governmental and nongovernmental organizations. So that, in the end, we can lead families in these countries to healthy people and healthy cities.[6,14]

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