

**SPECIAL REPORT:**  
**The Humane Society of the United States and Hurricane Gustav**

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September 1, 2008

Good morning – As you celebrate your Labor Day you will no doubt see many news updates on the progress of Hurricane Gustav. As some of you may know, Humane Society of the United States teams have been deployed to Louisiana for several days participating in what many are calling the most efficient mass evacuation in U.S. history. I believe that countless human and animal lives have been saved as a result of this evacuation's unprecedented focus on the animals of the Crescent City.

As a long-time animal rescue specialist, I have seen just about every rescue scenario imaginable. But this is the first time that I have deployed to facilitate the proactive rescue of an entire city's pet population. Lessons learned from Katrina spurred both state and local officials to include animals in new emergency preparedness plans. And now, almost three years to the day after Katrina bore down upon the Gulf Coast, we are putting these crucial plans to work.

In order to respond to the wide array of needs for this complicated deployment, we sent several different teams into Louisiana. Chris Schindler, Desiree Bender, Lou Guyton and Julia Breaux have been in Baton Rouge setting up and assisting with the care of animals at an emergency animal shelter at the Southern University Agriculture Center in Baton Rouge. Another animal rescue team met up with twenty NDART volunteers led by field responder Meredith Shields to help out at a Shreveport emergency shelter housing hundreds, and eventually thousands of displaced animals. And I have been leading two teams of field responders performing animal evacuations in New Orleans.

Many members of our rescue team witnessed first-hand the horrible animal suffering that took place during Katrina. It is these memories that propelled us during the past few days of non-stop animal evacuations. Every animal that we were able to get out of the city was one less life that would have to stay behind and weather this potentially deadly storm.

Our last evacuation mission in preparation for Gustav proved to be the most moving as well. The team was called to the New Orleans Evacuation Center for one more last-minute rescue. Our team received orders to transport the very last truckload of animals leaving New Orleans for higher ground. Most of these animals belong to first responders – individuals staying behind to weather the storm and look out for the safety of others. While they are risking their own lives for the greater good, they aren't willing to risk the safety of their companion animals. It is truly an honor to put their minds at ease and make them the promise that we will deliver their pets to safety.

While I can't be certain just how many animals still remain in the city, I do know that the increased focus on pet evacuation has saved countless vulnerable animals from a certain death. As we wait out the storm we hope that Gustav spares the Gulf Coast a devastating blow, but know that we will be there to respond to the animals in need whatever the storm brings.

Respectfully,

Scotlund Haisley  
Senior Director, Emergency Services  
The Humane Society of the United States

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