

## **El Nino Preparedness for Pets**

El Nino's heavy rains may send jaw-dropped Southern Californians running to the windows in amazement (and sometimes glee), but those same storms may send pets running the other way — taking refuge under beds, deep inside closets, burrowing under whatever they can find. First up, keep 'em inside, cozy and dry. And if it's not possible to do that when you are away from home, make sure they have shelter in a warm place that won't flood. Even for pets safely inside, the rain, wind and thunder can be frightening. Here's some tips, courtesy of Rancho Coastal, to help calm skittish pets.

- Reassure your pet that everything is fine. Speak in a soothing voice. Remember that your pets can tell when you're upset.
- Make sure they have access to their "safe zones" to hide if they need to. This might be a crate, an open closet, or other room where they have access to food, water, and blankets or beds.
- Consider a dog anxiety vest such as "ThunderShirt," a form-fitting wrap that gives pets the feeling of being hugged. The shirts come in a variety of sizes and are adjustable.
- If you have to leave, leave them with something that smells like you — a shirt, a towel, maybe a blanket — to reassure frightened or skittish pets.
- Don't force them out of a place where they feel safe. If a cat or dog hides under a bed, behind the couch, or in a closet, leave it there if it's safe. It's OK to try coaxing it out with treats or affection, but do not force a pet to leave the place it feels safe.