

# From Flood to Forever Home: Florida Animal Refuge Damaged by Hurricane Sally Announces Plans to Move to Permanent Home

*Alaqua Animal Refuge has announced it has advanced the timing of its relocation to their future home as immediately as possible due to devastating flooding.*

FREEPORT, FL, USA, October 21, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Alaqua Animal Refuge](#), located in the Florida Panhandle, has announced it has advanced the stages and timing of its permanent relocation to their future home as immediately as possible, due to devastating flooding caused by Hurricane Sally.

In mid-September, the category two hurricane battered the Florida Panhandle for almost four days with monumental amounts of rain and heavy wind, causing massive flooding before making landfall in Alabama. Unfortunately, the 10-acre Refuge suffered critical damage from the flooding and most of its animal buildings, dog kennels, cat cabins, and other animal enclosures were significantly under water by four to five feet.

After a full assessment of the damages, it was determined that most of the buildings were beyond repair. Additionally, the poor conditions of the structures would not be able to provide the adequate and necessary environment for the animals to thrive within long-term.

"It has been very tough to be operational in our current state. We are still recovering while we strategize on how to get up and running more quickly and ensuring that all of our animals are getting the proper medical care and daily needs met," said Alaqua Founder Laurie Hood. "As hard as it is to say, we don't see ourselves getting back to normal operations at our current facility. We



Animal buildings and enclosures at the onset of flooding at Alaqua Animal Refuge.

are at a serious crossroads.”

The animal housing and enclosures that were damaged were originally going to serve as temporary shelters to be relocated to Alaqua’s new facility while their permanent buildings were being built as planned. Now that those structures are damaged, the Refuge is having to come up with creative ways to house animals safely and effectively on their new property.

At any given time, Alaqua is home to more than 400 animals. And as of today, Alaqua is still closed for public visitation and tours because of COVID-19 precautions and county regulations that have been in place since late March.

Adoptions are being conducted as virtually as possible, including “meet and greets” with potential adopters and provision of curbside service for pickup of animals and final adoption materials.

At the onset of the flooding, the Refuge quickly switched to a foster-based environment for its smaller animals and some its larger ones to keep them safe, and continues to provide all medical care, food, and other necessities for those animals. This program (and its foster families) has been a lifesaver for the Refuge in the short-term. Plans include keeping the foster program in place for the time being as much as possible, until all the animals can be secured in the new facility, without much additional interruption.

The Refuge has always been a vital resource during times of crisis and emergency situations—on call and ready to help at a moment’s notice for their local community, the state of Florida, and other neighboring states. Alaqua continues to help people, counties, and communities who have no resources at their disposal.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Michael, a category 5 storm that made landfall just 50 miles east of Alaqua, the Refuge immediately shifted their focus to help the thousands of animals and their owners affected by the storm. For many, Alaqua was their only hope. Last year when Hurricane Dorian hit Grand Bahama Island, Alaqua was one of the organizations called in to help assess damages to three farms with horses, and ended up creating a special fund to help one of the devastated families and their animals.

Today, Alaqua finds itself on the other side of the fury and storm, lacking resources to help themselves and others in need. With the ongoing challenges of COVID-19, annual fundraisers canceled, and now Hurricane Sally, Alaqua finds itself trying to survive.

Even though Alaqua’s current situation has changed, the need for their work and for saving animals’ lives hasn’t stopped. Therefore, it has become critical to get the Refuge back to operational capacity and a fully functioning facility quickly.

“We’ve always been known for being there for our community and our state in times of need.

But we now find ourselves with the tables turned and are in a position of losing most of our entire facility before we can move to our future home about 10 miles away," said Hood.

Alaqua's most immediate need is funding for housing and fencing for animals at the new facility so they can continue to shelter and care for animals while permanent structures continue to be constructed as planned. The original site plan has been modified to include these new animal areas that will serve as emergency housing. Long-term use of this housing will include additional maternity buildings and kennels for sanctuary and senior residents.

Alaqua plans to use its existing buildings at their current location short-term as they raise funds to be able to purchase this emergency housing, and get operational on their new property. Once secured, the Refuge will start moving their operations and animals to again be at full capacity.

"Instead of trying to put a band-aid on the buildings, we decided to take a deep breath and just focus on getting into our new facility. This is the only way we can get back to some type of normalcy for the animals and the people that depend on our services," reiterated Hood.

Although the relocation is a massive undertaking, Alaqua will continue to give second chances to animals and people. This is a pivotal time in their journey and has become the Refuge's primary focus. After finding forever homes for tens of thousands of animals, Alaqua needs continued support now so that they too can move into their permanent, forever home. Individuals or businesses who would like to contribute and donate can do so by visiting this link:

[www.bit.ly/alaqua-move](http://www.bit.ly/alaqua-move)

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