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# Veterinary hospital brings pet food, beds for relief

**SARAH C. JOHNSON**  
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A load of about 6,000 pounds of dog and cat food arrived at Viewmont Animal Hospital on Friday to help those impacted by Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina.

The food was delivered by an animal hospital out of Wilmington. Leashes, cages, carriers, water and dog beds were also donated, Eastern Carolina Veterinary Referral Emergency and Specialty Hospital Director Gary Walker said.

“Anyone that needs anything, if you can get here (to Viewmont Animal Hospital),” Walker said. “Come and get what you need. Get as much as you need. It’s open access and free to the public.”

The pet food and supplies can be picked up at Viewmont Animal Hospital during regular business hours, Hospital Manager Melissa Hammer said.

Charlotte Quinney works the front desk at Viewmont Animal Hospital. She said some of the calls she received by people seeking help for their animals have been heartbreaking.

“One lady was looking for a certain cat food. She called from Black Mountain,” Quinney said. “She’d just gotten cell service, and she was desperate. She said, through her panic, her house and car are fine, but she was rambling, ‘The neighbors are dead. All the cars are crushed.’ Her daughter lives in Hickory, so she was trying to make her way down here and then the phone disconnected. I tried to go back and see if I could find her number, but it wouldn’t pull up.”

Quinney said another elderly woman came down from Banner Elk in Avery County. The woman had her 14-year-old dog with her. She came to get medication for her dog, Quinney said.

Quinney said Viewmont Animal Hospital can fill emergency prescriptions for people’s pets.

“(The Banner Elk woman’s) house is gone. She’s just displaced and she’s probably in her 80s,” Quinney said. “Everyone I have talked to is elderly.”

Hammer said seeing the devastation up close has been mentally difficult for her and other staff members. Quinney agreed.

“Face-to-face you get more of an impact,” Quinney said. “Versus watching it on your Facebook and your TV, it’s the emotion you are actually feeling. It’s gut wrenching. I think that’s what’s affected me is actually talking (to victims of Hurricane Helene).”

Chris Johnson lives in Brevard in Transylvania County, which is a little less than an hour south of Asheville. Johnson volunteered



**SARAH C. JOHNSON PHOTOS, HICKORY DAILY RECORD**

Volunteers use a gurney to wheel in large bags of dog food into the lobby of Viewmont Animal Hospital on Friday.



Viewmont Animal Hospital staff and volunteers carry boxes of canned dog and cat food.

### When can you pick up supplies?

Viewmont Animal Hospital Manager Melissa Hammer said no appointment or call-ahead is required to pick up pet supplies.

Viewmont Animal Hospital hours are:

- Mondays: 7:30 a.m.–7:30 p.m.
- Tuesdays: 7:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m.
- Wednesdays: 7:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m.
- Thursdays: 7:30 a.m.–7:30 p.m.
- Fridays: 7:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m.

to bring his truck and a trailer. After loading the trailer and bed of his truck, Johnson said he would take the supplies directly to places with heavy impact like Old Fort in McDowell County and Black Mountain and Swannanoa in Buncombe County.

“Send more stuff,” Johnson said. “They need help. Send anything. Nothing’s too small. I feel like a lot of people that I’ve talked to don’t know how to help. They think it’s too small or it’s not enough. I think it all adds up quickly.”

Walker said the supplies taken up the mountains by Johnson will be made available to the public.

“(Johnson) is going to deliver it house to house if he needs to,” Walker said.

Hammer said she is overwhelmed and thankful for the support from the North Carolina coast to help the mountain communities impacted by Hurricane Helene. The donations filled a large U-Haul box truck and four cars. The lobby and several exam rooms at Viewmont Animal Hospital were full of supplies.

“When we first decided to come out here, people said, ‘You can’t get to Asheville,’” Walker said. “And I said, ‘I know, but I know I can get to Hickory.’ We’re part of the same parent company, so



A volunteer carries a box of blankets and cans of cat food into Viewmont Animal Hospital in Hickory.



Volunteers unload boxes of Rachel Ray’s canned dog food. The cans were part of donations brought to Hickory from Wilmington.



Viewmont Animal Hospital staff and volunteers load heavy bags of dog food into a large rolling bucket.

I called them on Monday morning and said, ‘We have a plan that we’re going to bring food, and I need to deliver it to you. Will you allow us to drop it off?’ They said, ‘Absolutely.’”

Walker said when Eastern Carolina Veterinary Referral Emergency and Specialty Hospital started taking donations, the lobby was filled within 72 hours. Walker said he plans to bring another shipment to Hickory on Wednesday since the Wilming-

ton hospital filled up again with donations.

Hammer said monetary donations can be made to Viewmont Animal Hospital to help pay for emergency treatment for animals. To make a monetary donation, call or text 828-328-2448.

Viewmont Animal Hospital is at 2870 Second St. NE in Hickory.

Sarah Johnson is the courts and breaking news reporter for the Hickory Daily Record.

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