

First Aid for Your Dog

Our hope for you, as a pet owner, is that you will never encounter an emergency situation. However, reality is that accidents happen. In the event of an accident or emergency, it is always best to be informed and know the proper first aid procedures for your pet. This handout will outline the basics of canine first aid that every pet owner should know.

If my pet has been injured, what should I do first?

Remain Calm. The key to any emergency situation is to be able to remain calm and avoid panicking in order to think clearly.

Assess the Situation. While remaining calm, assess the situation and determine the proper first aid techniques to administer.

Administer First Aid.

Call or Transport your pet to the Veterinarian. After stabilizing the situation, contact your veterinarian for assistance and to give them advance warning of your pet's condition and the care he may need to receive.

First Aid is considered to be the initial treatment given in an emergency situation. This treatment is given for the purpose of saving life, minimizing pain, and reducing the risk of permanent injury. First aid for pets is often administered by a knowledgeable owner and greatly assists the veterinarian in making your pet's long term recovery a success.

Before beginning first aid procedures on your pet, it is important to remember that if an animal is in pain, it may react differently to those around them. Therefore, care and caution should be taken to avoid being bitten by your pet out of pain, fear and panic. To begin First Aid on an injured pet:

Assess your pet for Shock. Shock is the body's response to a serious injury. It includes a severe drop in blood pressure and unresponsiveness. Some other indications of shock are rapid breathing, pale mucous membranes, vomiting and shaking. If your pet displays these symptoms, try to keep the animal as calm and as still as possible. Cover your pet with blankets, coats or newspapers to maintain and conserve body temperature.

Assess and apply the ABCs of First Aid.

Airway- Assess your pet's airway to make sure that there is not any foreign object blocking the flow of oxygen to the brain. You should observe for things such as vomit, saliva, sticks, balls or other objects. If your pet's airway is obstructed, do your best to

clear or remove the objects, but make sure that you do not further lodge the item in your pet's throat.

Breathing- Observe your pet for breathing. If the animal is unconscious and is not breathing, apply chest compressions with the palm of your hand. With your other hand, feel for the animal's pulse just above the elbow. If your pet is still not breathing, then close the animal's muzzle, cover the animal's mouth with yours and breathe in firmly and slowly. Remember that if you are unsure of the animal's health history, vaccination records or veterinary record, it is best to avoid contact with all bodily fluids and blood.

Cardiac Function- If, upon feeling for a pulse, one cannot be detected then it may be necessary to perform chest compressions as well. Press down firmly, but controlled, with the palm of your hand on your pet's chest. A simple form of pet CPR is to perform five (5) chest compressions to every one to two (1-2) breaths.

Assess your pet for other injuries. Observe your pet for broken limbs or bleeding and administer the appropriate first aid.

Administering First Aid for burns, cuts or heat stroke?

Burn- If your pet has been burned, cool the area as quickly as possible with cool water and cover it with cool, damp towels. If the burn was caused by a chemical, flush the area with cool water for at least fifteen minutes and contact your veterinarian as soon as possible.

Cuts- If your pet is bleeding, examine the area for foreign bodies. If none are present clean the area and cover it with a gauze pad. Many cuts require medical attention and it is best to call your veterinarian immediately. If a wound is treated professionally within four hours, it can usually be sutured with successful results. However, after four hours of the accident, wounds have a greater risk of infection and serious complications.

Heat Stroke- Heat stroke typically occurs in the summer months when pets are left in sweltering situations without adequate ventilation or water supplies. If your pet demonstrates the signs of heat stroke, which are excessive panting, distress and coma, then immediately call your veterinarian and take measure to reduce your pet's body temperature. Soaking with cool water and fanning your pet, will allow evaporation to cool its body. Avoid using ice or ice water as these may bring down your pet's body temperature too rapidly and cause complications.