



A QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE TO FIRST AID

TAKEN FROM A PENNSYLVANIA VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION HANDOUT

Pets may require first aid for a number of reasons: injury, illness, seizure, or an accident. Your pet should see your veterinarian for treatment, but what happens in the meantime? Pet First Aid is care you administer yourself immediately, but it cannot/does not take the place of proper veterinary care. Brushing up on what to do in an emergency can make first aid less stressful and can even save your pet's life until veterinary care is received.

If your pet is injured, it could be in pain and is also most likely scared and confused. You need to be care to avoid getting hurt, bitten or scratched. Never assume that even the gentlest pet will not bite or scratch if injured. Pain and fear can make animals unpredictable or even dangerous.

- Don't attempt to hug an injured pet, and always keep your face away from its mouth. Although this may be your first impulse to comfort your pet, it might only scare the animal more or cause them pain.
- Perform any examination slowly and gently. Stop if your animal becomes more agitated.
- Call your vet or an emergency vet clinic before you move your pet so they can be ready for you when they arrive.
- If necessary and if your pet is not vomiting, place a muzzle on the pet to reduce the chances you will be bitten. Cats and other small animals may be wrapped in a towel to restrain them, but make sure your pet is not wrapped in the towel too tightly and its nose is uncovered so it can breathe. [Cats may also travel in a carrier if able to get them inside without exacerbating injury.]
- NEVER muzzle a pet that is vomiting.
- If possible, try to stabilize injuries before moving and injured animal by splinting or bandaging them.
- While transporting your injured pet, keep it confined in a small area to reduce the risk of additional injury. Pet carriers work well, or you can use a box or other container (but make sure your pet has enough air). For larger dogs, you can use a board, blanket or something similar to act as a stretcher.

BASIC FIRST AID SEIZURES

- Keep your pet away from any objects (including furniture) that might hurt it. Do not try to restrain the pet.
- Time the seizure (they usually last 2-3 mins).
- After the seizure has stopped, keep your pet as warm and quiet as possible and contact your vet.

FRACTURES

- Muzzle your pet.
- Gently lay your pet on a flat surface for support.
- While transporting your injured pet to a vet, use a stretcher (you can use a board or other firm surface as a stretcher, or use a throw rug or blanket as a sling). If possible, secure the pet to the stretcher (make sure you don't put pressure on the injured area or the animal's chest) for transport--this may be as simple as wrapping a blanket around them.
- You can attempt to set the fracture with a homemade splint, but remember a badly-placed splint can do more harm than good. If in doubt, it is always best to leave the bandaging and splinting to a vet.



BLEEDING

- Muzzle your pet.
- Press a clean, thick gauze pad over the wound, and keep pressure over the wound with your hand until the blood starts clotting. This will often take several minutes for the clot to be strong enough to stop the bleeding. Hold pressure on it for a minimum of 3 minutes and then check it.
- If bleeding is severe and on the legs, apply a tourniquet (using an elastic band or gauze) between the wound and the body, and apply a bandage and pressure over the wound. Loosen the tourniquet for 20seconds every 15-20 minutes. Severe bleeding can quickly be life-threatening--get your animal to a veterinarian immediately.

BLEEDING (INTERNAL)

- Symptoms: bleeding from mouth, nose, rectum, coughing up blood, blood in urine, pale gums, collapse, weak and rapid pulse.
- Keep animal as warm and quiet as possible and transport immediately to a veterinarian.

CHOKING

- Symptoms: difficulty breathing, excessive pawing at the mouth, choking sounds when breathing or coughing, blue-tinged lips/tongue.
- Use caution--a choking pet is more likely to bite in panic.
- If the pet can still breathe, keep it calm and get it to a vet.
- Look into the pet's mouth to see if a foreign object is visible. If you see an object, gently try to remove it with pliers or tweezers, but be careful not to push the object further down the throat. Don't spend a lot of time trying to remove it. If it is not easy to reach--don't delay, and get your pet to a vet immediately.
- If you can't remove the object or your pet collapses, place both hands on the side of your pet's rib cage and apply firm quick pressure, or lay your pet on it's side and strike the rib cage firmly with the palm of your hand 3-4 times. The idea is the sharply push air out of the lungs and push the object out from behind. Keep repeating this until the object is dislodged or if trying this while enroute, until you arrive at the vets's office.

HEATSTROKE

- NEVER leave your pet in the car on warm days. The temperature inside a car can rise very quickly to dangerous levels, even on milder days. Pets can succumb to heatstroke very easily and must be treated very quickly to give them the best chance of survival.
- If you cannot immediately get your pet to a vet, move it to a shaded area and out of direct sunlight.
- Place a cool or cold, wet towel around its neck and head (do not cover your pets eyes, nose or mouth).
- Remove the towel, wring it out, and rewet it and rewrap it every few minutes as you cool the animal.
- Pour or use a hose to keep water running over the animal's body (especially the abdomen and between the hind legs), and use your hands to massage its legs and sweep the water away as it absorbs the body heat.
- Transport the pet to the vet as soon as possible.

SHOCK

- Symptoms: weak pulse, shallow breathing, nervousness, dazed eyes. Usually follows severe injury or extreme fright.
- Keep animal restrained, warm and quiet.
- If animal is unconscious, keep head level with rest of body.
- Transport animal immediately to the vet.