

First Aid in Companion Animals

It is beneficial for owners to learn first aid techniques that may be necessary to save their pet's life

Emergency Situations

Before we start giving information on first aid in companion animals it is essential to contact your veterinarian immediately when you notice the following signs in your pet [Click here](#)

Content First Aid Kit [Click here](#)

First Aid at home

1. Wound

- a. Superficial
- b. Deep
- c. Profusely bleeding
- d. Abscess

2. Fracture

- a. Closed
- b. Open

3. Overheating

4. Eye problem

5. Car accident

6. Fall from great height

7. Vomiting & Diarrhea

8. Gastric Torsion

Ad.1. a. Superficial wound

If you find your pet at home and part of the skin is torn or lacerated but the wound is not bleeding, you can apply a “weak tea: solution of Iodine to disinfect the wound. Depending on the size of the wound you can keep the pet at home or have it checked at the vet clinic. Most superficial wounds heal nicely without being seen by a veterinarian.

b. Deep wound

Deep wounds are mostly related to penetrating trauma (a bite, a sharp item, glass). When taking care of deep wounds it is important to understand that these will always be contaminated and therefore abundant rinsing with disinfecting solutions is very important. Bite wounds tend to not only be deep but also have caused a lot of destruction under the seemingly small puncture wound. Check the wound also for pieces of glass or other. Not all wounds need suturing but after initial rinsing and stopping of bleeding it is best to have your pet checked by a veterinarian the same day so a course of antibiotics can be started.

c. Profusely bleeding wounds

Profusely bleeding wounds are always an emergency, but rather than racing off to the Vet stay calm and apply pressure on the wound so the bleeding is under control. While continuing pressure ask for help to bring you to see the Vet in order to stop the bleeding completely. Do not panic your pet now needs you!

d. Abscess

Although causing alarming signs of unwell-being abscesses seldom are an emergency. They will cause a high fever, are extremely painful and give symptoms of a fractured leg, but once opened or ruptured will give direct relief. Abscesses are swollen, feel warm and are often red in color and most pets will not allow you to touch them. Check for a “soft-spot” which will indicate the abscess is about to break through. It is very important to keep abscesses open for approximately 5 days, in order to prevent recurrence. (salt water can be used to rinse out abscesses (1 table spoon in 500 ml of water)

2. a. Closed Fracture

When dealing with a closed fracture you will see that the pet is unable to use that part of the body and avoids putting weight or pressure on it. Sometimes you will find parts of the body pointing in odd directions or you can feel the definite

feeling of scratching bones on each other. Fractures are almost always due to trauma and therefore the pet should be seen as soon as possible by a veterinarian. If you suspect a fracture try to immobilize that part of the body and protect yourself as well. Even the sweetest pet might bite you due to the sharp pain fractures cause.

b. Open Fracture

Open fractures can be recognized by bones sticking out of the wounds or the ability to see bones when looking into the wound. Just as above the pet should be seen by a vet on short notice and they will need to be put on antibiotic treatment. Cover the wound carefully and check the pet for vital signs. Make sure you put pressure on the wound in order to stop the bleeding.

3. Overheating

Pets that are overheating will very often show this at a very late stage. If you suspect overheating (panting, restlessness, fainting, vomiting, etc) do not waste times to call anyone just get the pet to cool down. You can use anything, water, ice, soft drink cans, frozen vegetables, etc. just as long as it cools your pet. Take him/her out of the sun, apply the cooling aids closely around the pet's body and wet him/her down. Take a thermometer and stick this in the anus. Record the temperature and repeat this every 15 minutes (over 39.3 it too much however most pets which are overheated will have temperatures of 41.5 or 42+ C). If you see the temperature is coming down, call your vet and bring your pet in for re-check. Overheating causes enormous cell damage and the magnitude of the problem might only show later.

4. Eye problems

These can be different in origin but all need immediate action.

- a. Foreign body in the eye
- b. Sharp trauma in the eye
- c. Blunt trauma in the eye
- d. Bleeding
- e. Laceration
- f. Popped out eye
- g. Milky eye

These are just a few of the possibilities, and most of them are extremely painful. If your pet keeps his/her eye closed and can not stand light it needs to be seen by a vet a.s.a.p. Be careful these pets are in pain and will bite, they have lost partially or totally their vision and might not see you clearly. If the eye is actually popping out of the socket (often in brachycephalic (short nosed) breeds) you will have to pop it back in as soon as possible in order to try to save vision for this eye. Put your whole hand over the eye and just push it back and keep pushing it till you have reached the veterinarian. If you withdraw your hand the eye will pop out again.

5. Car accident

If you see an animal being hit by a car think of your own safety first and restrain your kids in the car. Park in a safe place. Now you can go and check out the pet. Handle it with care and try to get it on a stretcher (glossy magazine/cardboard box/ towel between 2 poles). Carefully check it for breathing, any damage to the head, responsiveness and bring it to the vet immediately. If you call the vet before arrival a team can be waiting in order to give immediate care.

6. Fall from great height.

Animals (mostly cats) that fall from great heights can have surprisingly enough, little damage. However most will have hit the pavement with their chin and fractured their chin/mandibula and often will have split their palate due to the impact. Often they have fracture limbs as well. Treat them with care, move them onto a stretcher if possible and bring them to the Veterinarian. They suffer fractures, contusions and/or internal trauma/bleeding. Restrain them without force by using a pet carrier and calm them down.

7. Vomitting & Diarrhea

If your pet starts to vomit and/or has diarrhea then you can wait depending on the age and size of the animal and after excluding possible poisoning. Possible poisoning cases should be seen immediately and young animals might have infectious diseases that can cause them to deteriorate quickly. Adult pets for which poisoning has been excluded can be monitored for a few days. Minimize their food intake by 25% and give them 3-4 daily a small portion. You can also give them a blend diet of boiled rice and chicken for 1-2 days. Always make sure that your pet gets enough fluids and you can add some electrolytes in order to restore for the electrolytes lost. If your pet still regularly vomits after 1-2 days it is better to bring him/her in. Always make sure that you see the pet produce stool on a daily basis if this is his/her normal routine.

8. Gastric Torsion

If this is the case your dog will try to vomit but will not produce anything. He/she will become rapidly uncomfortable and the left side of the abdomen starts to swell. **THIS IS AN EMERGENCY WHICH SHOULD BE SEEN IMMEDIATELY.**

You can prevent this in most cases by feeding large dogs more frequently during the day in smaller portions and by not having them play directly after feeding. Also excessive water intake after feeding can contribute to the problem.