



ROANOKE
ANIMAL
HOSPITAL

Pet First Aid and Emergencies

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What is an Emergency? Webster's dictionary definition: "an unexpected and usually dangerous situation that calls for immediate action." In medicine, an emergency is a condition that requires intervention of a trained professional as soon as possible to stabilize and treat to ensure the best outcome.

True Emergencies (get to your veterinarian or an emergency clinic as soon as possible)

- Snake bite
- Seizures
- Hit by car
- Gunshot wounds
- Difficulty breathing/coughing incessantly
- Bleeding that does not abate within 5 minutes
- Pale, white or blue gums
- Straining to urinate or defecate without producing anything
- Intractable vomiting and/or diarrhea with obvious illness
- Swollen or painful abdomen
- Fractured limbs
- Eye injuries
- Heat exhaustion or heat stroke
- Unconsciousness or changes in mentation (depression, aggression, etc.)
- Collapse
- Smoke inhalation
- Burns
- Choking
- Large laceration
- Bite wounds to neck, chest or abdomen or "big dog little dog" aka BDL

Urgent Care Situation (Not necessarily an emergency but may seem like it) Call your veterinarian

- Plant or toxin ingestion (call ASPCA Poison Control or Pet Poison Hotline as well as your vet)
- Chewing an incision or sutures
- Broken nails
- Bee sting or insect bite
- Diarrhea with blood
- Unable to keep food down
- Small laceration
- Pain
- Vulvar discharge
- Hot spots
- Ingestion of a foreign object
- Not drinking for 24 hours or more
- Ocular discharge or painful eyes

“Prefergencies” (call your veterinarian to make an appointment)

- Itching
- Ear itching or smelly
- Fleas and/or ticks
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting but acting normal
- Limping
- Lump or mass
- Worms in stool
- Not eating

Majority of emergencies can be prevented! Keeping vaccines up to date, especially in puppies, and keeping pets on a leash or in a crate can prevent the majority of frantic calls to the vet or visits to the emergency clinic.

Transportation

- Use a well ventilated carrier to transport small dogs and cats
- Larger pets can be carried using a towel, bed sheet, or secured to a board with duct tape

First Aid for Common Emergencies or Incidents

Dogs and cats will bite or scratch when in pain, frightened or stressed, so protect yourself!

- Use a towel or blanket to gently wrap pets up
- Muzzle when appropriate. **Never muzzle if having respiratory issue!** Using a quick release muzzle or if necessary a rope, cloth, or strip of towel gently wrapped around the mouth with a half hitch under the jaw, then around the neck. The mouth should not be held shut! Just enough to prevent biting.
- Place cats in a carrier or box lined with towels
- Limit contact during transport to reduce stress and injury

Bite Wounds

- All bite wound that penetrate the skin should be checked by a veterinarian due to hidden trauma and high potential for infection
- Do not apply Neosporin, hydrogen peroxide or any home remedies without instruction from your veterinarian
- Clean wounds with cool water and a soft cloth.

Bleeding

Keeping pet confined when you are not around

Keep dogs on a leash when outside.

- Clean wounds with cool water and a soft cloth.
- Apply gentle pressure to the area. If flow is pulsing, then firmer pressure/bandage and get to a vet ASAP.
- A light bandage can be applied to the area for transport. Do not make the bandage too tight because this may affect tissue perfusion and adversely affect healing. Be able to get two fingers under the bandage all along its margins. When in doubt, do not do it!
- Possible bandage materials: Ace bandage, gauze, clean cotton strips, 2 inch tape, and even feminine hygiene products
- Do not apply a tourniquet

Broken Bones

- Use muzzles, towels, blankets, etc. to help restrain
- A splint can be applied if you know where the fracture is and the pet is properly and safely restrained. One key to stabilizing a fracture is immobilizing the joint above and below the fracture. If unable to do this (femur, humerus, pelvic fractures), do not apply a splint! A poorly placed splint may cause more pain and injury than leaving the fracture alone until veterinary care is provided. When in doubt, don't do it!
- Bandage material along with a firm stabilizing structure like wooden tongue depressors, rolled newspaper, PVC pipe, etc. can prevent further trauma or pain.

Insect Bite or Sting

Lots of potential candidates- ticks, bees, wasps, ants, spiders, scorpions, centipedes, etc.

Keep dogs and cats on flea and tick preventative year round

Perform a tick check after every outing in woods or fields

Save ticks in a sealed jar to take to your vet for identification

- Identify the insect (or arachnid) if possible. If they can be safely caught, then bring to your veterinarian in a sealed container.
- If a stinger is visible, scrape it off with the edge of credit card or tongue depressor
- Do not squeeze the stinger of a honey bee as this will inject more venom into the wound!
- Do not give any medications unless instructed by your veterinarian.

Snake Bite

Keep dogs on a leash, especially in wooded areas or tall grass

Common venomous snakes in our area (from most common to least): Copperhead, Cottonmouth/ Water Moccasin, Massasauga, Western Diamondback.

- Identifying the snake may help with treatment and prognosis, but do not attempt if it will put you in danger or delay treatment. Please do not kill the snake.
- Remain calm.
- Do not try to suck venom from a wound, cut the bite area, apply a tourniquet, apply a cold compress, administer any medications, or ignore a snake bite wound.
- Get to your veterinarian or emergency clinic ASAP. Most emergency clinics keep antivenin on hand while primary care clinics and hospitals do not.
- Vaccines are available, but efficacy is unproven. These may reduce the reaction and give you more time to seek help, but your pet should be evaluated any way.

Heat exhaustion or Heat stroke

Do not keep pets in an unventilated care or non-air conditioned car on warm days (15 minutes in a car on an 80 degree day can kill!)

Provide plenty of shade and cool water when outside.

Frequent breaks when playing. Resist the temptation to allow the dog to dictate length of play

- Take a rectal temperature. If greater than 105, start gentle cooling and get to your vet.
- Offer cool water to drink.
- Use gentle cooling techniques, such as cool water on the ears, arm pits, abdomen, and paws, a fan aimed at the body and face. Do not give the pet a cold bath, or apply ice!
- Get to your veterinarian ASAP if pet not getting better within 15 minutes, seems worse at any time, vomits, has diarrhea or seems depressed
- Bulldogs and heavy coated breeds especially susceptible.

Incisional dehiscence (incision opening)

Follow instructions for confinement, exercise restriction, and wearing an E-collar post-op

Do not let your pet lick or scratch the area affected. E-collars, T-shirts and socks can prevent another surgery

- Prevent pet from licking the area.
- If incision is located on the abdomen, lift the pet in and out of the car gently with a towel wrapped around the belly. Do not let the dog jump in or out of the car!
- Get to your veterinarian ASAP

Broken nail

Keep nails trimmed

- Clean area and apply corn starch, flour or styptic powder to help the blood to clot
- Though painful, does not need to be seen immediately unless bleeding will not stop
- Should be addressed by your veterinarian due to degree of discomfort and likelihood of infection.

Vomiting/Diarrhea

- Do not give any medication, such as Pepto Bismol, or Immodium, unless directed by your veterinarian for this instance
- Document what is contained in vomit.
- Do not worry if they do not want to eat within several hours of vomiting.

- Do not offer any food for 12 hours after last episode. Offer a small amount of water every 2-3 hours if no vomiting occurs. If able to keep down for another 12 hours, then you may offer a small amount of bland food like boiled white chicken and cooked white rice.

Choking

- Many choking events, are not choking, but caused by other respiratory or gastrointestinal issues.
- If you can see the object in the back of the throat, then the Heimlich may be attempted. Do not use the Heimlich unless you can see the object because you may make the issue worse.
- Get to your veterinarian or emergency clinic ASAP even if the event has resolved.

Seizure

- Do not pick your pet up to comfort it. A very serious bite may occur because your pet does not know what is going on.
- Do not stick your hands in their mouth. Dogs and cats cannot swallow their tongues.
- Stay calm, and attempt to time how long the seizure lasts (active shaking or convulsing)
- Keep your pet from hurting himself or herself, by preventing falling or knocking things over
- Take pet to your veterinarian as soon as possible

Toxin Ingestion (poisons, medications, cleaners, plants, chemicals, moldy food, etc.).....

- Identify what your pet has ingested if possible. Best to bring bottles, packages, or any information on what the pet has eaten. Be comprehensive in what your pet gets orally besides food. Even if it is illegal, be honest because it can save your pet's life.
- Common toxic foods: Grapes/raisins, chocolate, caffeine, xylitol, bread dough, onions, garlic, macadamia nuts
- Many toxins take hours or days to show effects and are best treated early.
- "Natural" does not mean safe! Many of the most deadly toxins known to man are 100% natural
- Call poison control. ASPCA Animal Poison Control at (888) 426-4435 or Pet Poison Helpline 855-764-7661. It costs money, but this will save time (and possibly money), since they are on the cutting edge of diagnosis and treatment of toxin emergencies.
- Do not induce vomiting unless instructed. Vomiting the wrong thing, like certain toxins or batteries, or at the wrong time can make the situation worse
- Do not apply dog products to cats.

Dystocia (problems with birth)

- See your vet prior to birth for exam and x-rays. If you see signs of pushing for longer than 30 minutes, a puppy or sack appearing then going back in, lethargy, or more than 2 hours between puppies
- Puppies and kittens should be kept warm and dry at all times and should be nursing at least every 2-3 hours.
- Any birthing difficulty in a cat should be taken to your vet ASAP

CardioPulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)

A= Airway

Taking care, try to examine the airway

B=Breathing

Close the mouth, and gently exhale into the nostrils until the chest rises. Do not blow too hard!

C=Circulation

Chest compressions every 2-3 seconds (about 20-40% of the width of the chest over the heart under the left armpit)

Prevention and Preparation:

Keep valuable contact information handy

- Your veterinarian's numbers
- Local emergency clinic(s)
- Pet poison hotlines
- Prior to travel, research both day practices and emergency vets in the area you are staying or frequenting.
- Pertinent medical records (current conditions, lab work, medications, etc.)

Keep your dog on a leash. Travel with your cat (or small dog) in a carrier.

Spaying and neutering helps prevent roaming, fighting, some cancers, and unwanted litters

Keep food, trash, medications, etc. stored away from pets

Pet first aid kit

Rubber gloves	Saline Eye Wash	Duct tape	
Rectal thermometer	Roll gauze	Plastic wrap	
Betadine	ACE bandage	Bed sheet or towel	
Muzzle	Triple antibiotic ointment	Non-adherent wound pads	
Blunt bandage scissors	Gauze squares	Cotton sock	
Tweezers	Ice pack	Clean T-shirt	

- Do not give any medications not recommended by a veterinarian for the specific problem. You may make matters worse or the issue more difficult to treat.

***Keep vaccines, heartworm prevention and flea/tick prevention up to date.

Resources:

- Your veterinarian and local veterinary emergency clinic
- www.veterinarypartner.com A website written and maintained by veterinarians for client education
- Pet Poison Helpline- <http://www.petpoisonhelpline.com>
- ASPCA Animal Poison Control- <https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control>
- **The Pet Lover's Guide to First Aid and Emergencies** by Thomas K. Day, DVM, MS, DACVECC