



First-Aid Tricks For Pet Emergencies

WebMD Medical Reference

You're probably prepared in case a member of your family cuts himself or gets injured. But do you know what to do if your pet chokes on a bone or has a seizure? Knowing some basic pet first-aid techniques could mean the difference between life and death. Here are some common pet emergencies and what to do on the spot, before you head to the vet.

Hit by Car



An animal in pain is more likely to bite. So muzzle it first with a scarf, belt, or towel, unless it's vomiting. Get the animal off the road by gently sliding it onto a towel or blanket (these should be in your car's first-aid kit). Don't lift the animal. Make sure it's warm, as it may be in shock. If it seems to have any broken bones, roll up a magazine or newspaper to use as a splint.

Poisoned



Many household items can be dangerous to dogs and cats -- everything from antifreeze, insecticides, and aspirin to raisins and sugar-free gum. But don't panic. Many of these have antidotes. Call the Animal Poison Control hotline at 888-426-4435 or the Pet Poison Helpline at 800-213-6680 immediately. They can probably help you even before you get to the vet.

Choking



If your pet is unconscious, open its mouth and try to clear the object out with your fingers. Or hang a small animal from its back legs and try to shake the object out. If the animal is conscious, do a modified Heimlich maneuver. Place the pet on its side, applying pressure right behind the ribs and pressing your hands forward. This may help push the item out. Get someone else to drive to the vet so you can continue to do this on the way.

Seizures



A seizure will generally pass on its own in less than 3 minutes. Your job is to make sure the animal is safe while it's happening. Get any movable furniture away from the pet. Don't put your hands or your face near the animal's mouth, and don't pull its tongue out of the mouth. Unlike humans, animals won't swallow their tongues during a seizure. When the seizure is over, contact your vet.

Dog Bites



If another dog bites your pet, get to the clinic as soon as possible. Dog bites can pull a lot of hair and debris into the wound. If it's not cleaned out soon, it can become infected.

Bee and Wasp Stings



Bee and wasp stings usually cause just minor swelling and itching. If you can see the stinger, use a credit card to scrape it out, or pull it out with tweezers. An antihistamine like Benadryl will relieve some of the symptoms, but call your vet to ask how much to give. If you notice any swelling on the face or neck, or hives all over the body, get the animal to the vet right away. This could be a severe anaphylactic reaction -- a definite emergency.

Heatstroke



If your animal is panting heavily, drooling, having trouble breathing, or showing other symptoms of heatstroke, move it to a shady area immediately. Put a cool, wet cloth around its neck and head (not its face). You can also gently hose the animal down with cool water, especially the belly, before transporting it to the vet.

SOURCES:

American Veterinary Medical Association: "Pet first aid - basic procedures," "Household Hazards."

ASPCA: "Emergency Care - What Are Some First Aid Treatments I Can Perform on My Dog?" "Heat Wave Alert: Prevent Heat Stroke in Pets," "Pet Care: Animal Poison Control."

Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine: "Being prepared in an emergency."

Pet Poison Helpline.

Sheldon Rubin, DVM, spokesman, American Veterinary Medical Association; author, *Emergency First Aid for Dogs*.

