

First Aid for Pets

What's in your medicine cabinet? You probably have lots of things on hand in case you or your kids should have an accident. But are you prepared for a medical emergency involving your pet? Here are some suggestions.

Know your Vet's procedures for emergency situations, especially ones that occur after usual business hours. For example, some veterinarians always have someone on call, while others use special emergency hospitals for things that arise after hours. Keep phone numbers for the veterinarian, and a local emergency veterinary service where you can find them quickly.

Have a muzzle on hand. Many people never think to buy a muzzle because their pet is not normally aggressive. However, an injured or excited animal, even the gentlest ones, may try to harm you. You cannot help your pet if you can't handle them to administer the care they need.

In case of poisoning, the ASPCA has a Animal Poison Control Center available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. (A \$50 consultation fee may apply.) They can quickly provide you or your veterinarian with information on treatment and diagnostic aspects of animals exposed to hazardous substances. Keep the number handy (888) 426-4435 and be prepared to provide:

Your name, address and telephone number.

Information concerning the exposure (the amount of agent, the time since exposure, etc.). For various reasons, it is important to know exactly what poison the animal was exposed to. Have the product container/packaging available for reference.

The species, breed, age, sex, and weight of the animal(s) involved.

The symptoms your animal is experiencing.

Put together a first aid kit for your pet. Here are some items that should be in the kit that may be needed in a poisoning situation:

- A fresh bottle of hydrogen peroxide 3% (USP)
- Can of soft dog or cat food
- Turkey baster, bulb syringe or large medical syringe
- Saline eye solution to flush out eye contaminants
- Artificial tear gel to lubricate eyes after flushing

- Mild grease-cutting dishwashing liquid for the animal after skin contamination
- Rubber gloves
- Forceps to remove stingers

A variety of other emergencies may arise with your pet, such as bites, wounds, burns, etc. In addition to the poison related items, here are some other helpful things to add to your pet's first aid kit:

- Saline, for flushing wounds
- Sterile gauze, bandages and adhesive tape for bandaging wounds
- Ice pack, for burns or swelling
- Antibiotic ointment for wounds
- Hydrocortisone Cream, for rashes or itching
- Scissors, to trim away hair, cut bandages, etc.
- Tweezers
- Eye dropper
- Cotton swabs

Consider taking some first aid training. Many local chapters of the American Red Cross offer classes to teach the basics of handling emergencies with pets. Classes cover such things as CPR, rescue breathing, bleeding, broken bones, shock, etc. They also have a Pet First Aid video and a Pet First Aid reference book available. Contact your local Red Cross to purchase them.

The time to prepare for an emergency with your pet is BEFORE is arises. A little thought and preparation now may make all the difference for the recovery of your pet in a crisis.