

## First aid for your pet

— Contributed by Dr. Kamalan Jeeva

First aid care for your pet is very important, as it is the immediate and temporary care given to your pet when injured. It plays a significant role in ensuring your pet's well-being and chances of survival until it is presented to a veterinarian for immediate assessment and management. As owners there are many things to consider when you have an injured pet on your hands and here are some useful tips.

### Stay calm, don't panic!!

Most owners panic when they see their pet bleeding, choked or collapsed. It is natural for us to be worried about our pet's condition, however, time is of essence so we should think rationally by performing first aid. Being calm and getting your pet to professional hands immediately will be of great help to your pet.

### Protect yourself

When an injured pet is in pain, a tame pet may become fierce due to the intense pain it suffers. Often injured pets can turn and bite, not because they dislike you but because of the fear of more pain when you manipulate them or try to help them. Before helping, study the pet's behaviour first — is it snarling with teeth exposed, growling or hissing, ears straight back, tail between legs — these are all signs of an angry pet that may bite.

Always approach an injured pet cautiously and slowly, to observe its response to your presence and help. Back off if it tries to bite or scratch! It is advisable to keep a muzzle available for these situations.



### Rational considerations

Now that you are calm and thinking rationally, here are a few things that you will need to consider:

- Assess bleeding, if any, and apply pressure/bandage on the bleeding area
- Wrap your patient in a towel (patients in shock lose a lot of body heat)
- Move the pet to a safer place (away from traffic, hot sun, wet conditions, etc.)
- Avoid too much handling i.e. lifting, rolling - use a hard surface board if necessary
- Get in touch with your veterinarian and inform him of the necessary. Always have his phone number and address handy at all times.



## Basic First Aid for Unusual Circumstances

Now that we are done considering important issues, it is equally crucial to provide some basic care and help for the injured pet.

### Poisoning

Poisoning may manifest in your pet as a sudden change in behaviour and condition where they may start vomiting, frothing, convulsing or even bleeding. If you know the offending substance, take a sample of it to the vet as it may help the vet treat the animal specifically.

### Burns

In cases of burns, the best thing to do is to wrap your pet in a thick towel. Do not decide to apply bandage or plaster on the affected area as it may further irritate the wound. Seek professional advice as soon as possible.

### Heat Stroke

Heat stroke occurs most commonly in dogs when they have been left alone on a hot day without ventilation. If your dog has not already collapsed it may be panting, vomiting or frothing at the mouth. Remove your dog from under the heat and reduce its body temperature by dousing your pet in cold water. Get it to the vet immediately for further treatment. Leaving your dog in the car for short periods can also predispose it to heat strokes. It is advisable to not keep your pet locked up in your car especially on a sunny day.

### Choking

Anything from a piece of bone, small stick to a tennis ball may lodge in your pet's throat. This may pose some difficulty in your pet's breathing capabilities and quick action is necessary. Open the animal's mouth carefully and see if you can see the object and manually remove it. Do not waste time trying if you have been unsuccessful in the first 10 minutes. Get your pet to a veterinarian for further assistance and treatment.

As a responsible pet owner you should always have a pet first aid kit at home. It should consist of:

- Your vet's telephone number, plus the number of an emergency weekend or nighttime vet.
- A veterinary first aid manual such as *Emergency Care for Cats and Dogs*
- Gauze rolls or pads
- Adhesive tape
- Absorbent cotton
- Scissors, preferably with rounded tips
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Antibiotic ointment



- Eyewash
- Tweezers
- Rectal thermometer
- Syringe (without the needle) for giving oral medications
- Muzzle