

Pet First Aid Manual

Alpine Veterinary



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(867) 633-5700

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What is an Emergency?

There are times when you may wonder what constitutes an emergency situation for your pet and what can wait to be examined by a veterinarian during regular hours. Being able to recognize signs of a healthy animal is important as well as knowing when your animal is in pain or distress.

Signs of a healthy animal include:

- A bright attitude with normal appetite and drinking behaviour
- Clean eyes and ears without discharge or smell
- Moist, pink gums – when you push on the gums with your finger, the colour should briefly turn white, and then turn back to pink in less than two seconds
- A shiny coat and normal skin without signs of abrasions, swelling redness or discharge
- Normal breathing without heavy panting or increased effort
- Formed stool and no vomiting or signs of stomach upset
- No limping, swelling or painful joints

Signs of an emergency that would require immediate veterinary attention include:

- Laboured breathing
- White, grey or blue gums
- Seizure, collapse or fainting
- Dehydration – the pet will be lethargic, their eyes will appear sunken, and their skin will not snap back into position after being gently pinched
- Ingestion of potential toxins including human medications, chocolate, rat/mouse bait, or antifreeze



- Eye injuries
- Multiple episodes of vomiting or diarrhea in short period of time
- Straining to urinate or defecate, frequent small urinations or an inability to pass urine
- Trauma such as being hit by a car, fights with other animals or exposure to extreme heat or cold – even if your pet seems fine afterwards, there can sometimes be serious internal injuries that are not obvious
- Signs of pain including: panting, laboured breathing, restlessness, aggression, crying out or hiding
- Not eating for more than 24 hours

Other less serious conditions that may or may not need to be seen immediately include:

- Small lacerations where the bleeding is controlled and the area can be kept clean
- Swelling around the face or hives with otherwise normal behaviour and breathing
- Solitary episodes of vomiting or diarrhea
- Mild skin infections or 'hot spots'

If you are ever in doubt, do not hesitate to call your veterinarian for advice.



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Basic Safety

- Keep all chemicals and prescription medications out of reach or safely stored
- Learn what plants can be dangerous to your pet – the ASPCA Poison Control Center has an excellent resource on toxic and safe plants (<http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/poison-control>)
- Prevent access to compost and garbage
- Keep string (such as dental floss or wool) out of reach
- Never give your pet any over-the-counter or prescription human medication without speaking to a veterinarian first
- Keep dogs on-leash at all times near roads
- Do not allow your dog to chew on bones, as this can result in broken teeth, gastrointestinal upset and obstructions
- Dogs should not be allowed in the back of pick-up trucks, as dogs frequently fall out and suffer severe injuries



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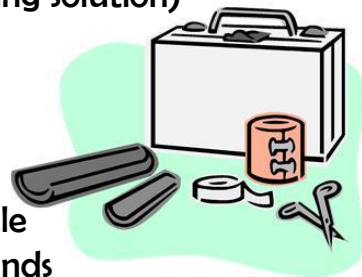
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Pet First Aid Kit

It is important to be prepared for pet-related emergencies. You should have a pet first aid kit in your home as well as a travel version, especially if you will be taking your pet to areas where veterinary care is not easily accessible.

There are commercially available first aid kits, but you can easily create your own with supplies from a human pharmacy. A basic kit should include:

- A water-proof hard sided container
- Vet wrap and cotton gauze bandage wrap
- Cotton gauze pads
- Telfa or non-stick pads
- First aid tape – the 1” white medical tape works well
- Blunt ended scissors
- Small utility knife
- Tweezers
- Nail trimmer and styptic powder such as Kwik Stop for torn toenails
- Antiseptic wash and antibiotic ointment such as Polysporin
- Saline eye rinse solution (not contact lens cleaning solution)
- Antihistamines such as Benadryl
- Digital thermometer
- Water-based lubricating jelly such as K-Y
- Epsom salts
- Soft muzzle or fabric material to use as a muzzle
- Latex gloves for your protection with dirty wounds



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When traveling it is also a good idea to carry your pet's vaccination papers and information regarding current prescriptions. You can label the inside of the first aid kit with your contact information as well as your veterinarian's name and phone number.



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Shock

- Any ill or injured pet can potentially go into shock
- The most common cause of shock is trauma, such as being hit by a car, attacked by another animal or gunshot wounds. Other causes include infections, severe vomiting and/or diarrhea, poisoning, and severe allergic reactions
- If your pet is injured, be very careful to protect yourself from injury – this may require muzzling your pet before handling
- Shock is a potentially life-threatening condition where the body's organs and tissues don't receive enough blood and are oxygen-deprived
- Signs of shock include:
 - White or grey gums or mucous membranes
 - Heart rate greater than 140 beats per minute in large dogs and 220 beats per minute in small dogs and cats
 - Weak or rapid, shallow breathing
 - Cool feet and ears
 - Decreased alertness progressing to unconsciousness

If you have any concerns that your pet is going into shock secondary to an injury or illness, try to keep them warm and call your veterinarian immediately.



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CPCR

- Cardiopulmonary cerebral resuscitation (CPCR, formerly CPR) is the treatment for cardiopulmonary arrest, which is when the heart stops beating
- CPCR is intended to provide sufficient bloodflow and oxygen to the brain and major organs until more advanced medical therapy can be started
- The success rate for CPCR in animals is lower than in people – in the hospital setting, approximately 2% of animals who suffer cardiac arrest will survive to be discharged from the hospital
- Research in people has shown that chest compressions alone can be as effective as chest compressions in conjunction with rescue breathing – so if there is only one person available to perform CPCR, they should perform only chest compressions
- If an animal is sick enough to require CPCR, then they should be seen by a veterinarian as soon as possible - Do not delay transport in order to perform CPCR

Basic CPCR

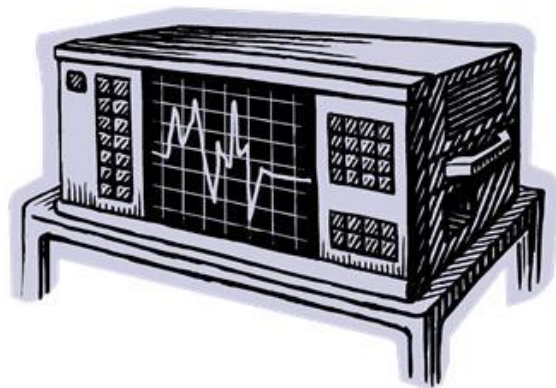
- Ensure that the pet is actually unconscious – some pets can sleep heavily and may cause you injury if they are startled by the CPCR
- Open the airway – pull the head and neck forward and pull the tongue out
- Look in the mouth and remove any saliva, vomit or foreign bodies
- If you cannot see inside the mouth, gently sweep your finger to the back of the mouth to feel for any vomit or foreign bodies
 - There is a bony structure called the hyoid apparatus (the Adam's apple) deep in the throat – be careful not to pull on this or you could cause damage



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- If the animal does not begin breathing spontaneously within 10 seconds of opening the airway and there are two people available to perform CPR, begin rescue breathing
 - For large dogs, cover the dog's nose with your mouth and forcefully blow your breath into their lungs
 - For smaller dogs and cats, hold the corners of the mouth closed tightly while you breathe in through the nose. Smaller animals do not require large breaths to fill their lungs
 - Breaths should be given 10-15 times per minute
 - If there is only one person available to perform CPR then chest compressions only should be performed
- To begin chest compressions, lay the animal on their side and compress the chest wall where it is widest with one or both hands. Aim for around 120 compressions per minute (this is equivalent of 'Staying Alive' by the Bee Gees.)
- If possible, give breaths during compressions - If not, give a breath for approximately every 12 compressions

Remember that in the vast majority of cases, CPR is insufficient to revive patients who are sick enough to experience cardiac arrest.



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Pain Medication

- It is very hard to watch your pet suffer pain secondary to an injury or illness. However, many over the counter medications can be harmful and even fatal to dogs and cats, including aspirin, ibuprofen and Tylenol.

Never give your pet ANY over the counter medications without speaking to a veterinarian first. There are safe pain medications that can be prescribed for your pet.

- If your pet accidentally eats an over-the-counter or prescription medication, please call your veterinarian.
- Clinical signs of toxicity from some of these medications may take days to weeks to appear, so even if your pet appears fine after being given an over-the-counter medication, this does not rule out the possibility of them becoming sick later.



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Hit By Car

- Move your pet to a safe location away from traffic
- If your pet is in pain, they may be more prone to biting, even if they wouldn't bite under normal circumstances. Be sure to protect yourself. You can use a large blanket or quilt to help prevent bites and scratches while moving the animal, or use a shoelace to make a muzzle.
- Try and get the pet laying with their sternum on the ground (as opposed to laying on their side) if possible if breathing is labored. You can use rolled-up blankets to help keep the pet propped up in this position.
- Any pet with a nosebleed should be kept laying with their sternum on the ground
- Apply pressure to any bleeding wounds
- Try to keep your pet calm, as increased blood pressure will increase the bleeding

Any animal that has been hit by a vehicle should be assessed by a veterinarian



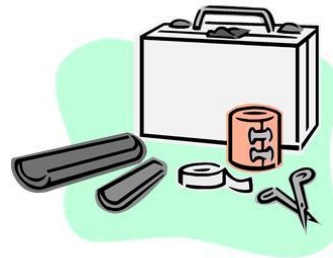


Wounds

- If there is a penetrating wound with object stuck in the body, leave it to be removed by the veterinarian
- Do not try to break up a dog fight, as there is a high risk of personal injury

Because of the mobility of dogs' skin, the extent of tissue damage underneath the skin from bite wounds can be more severe than what can be seen externally – as such, all bite wounds should be examined by a veterinarian

- Any bite wounds that go through the skin should be considered contaminated by the bacteria that live in a dog's mouth
- Active bleeding should have pressure applied – you can use a clean cloth, a feminine sanitary pad or gauze held over the bleeding area so that it can absorb the blood and allow it to clot. Do not disturb the blood clots after they form. If blood soaks through, do not remove the compress, apply additional layers of absorbent material.
- If the wound is on a limb, you can combine direct pressure with elevating the limb to try and decrease blood flow to the wound
- Wounds that are not actively bleeding can have a light bandage applied
- **Use of a tourniquet is potentially dangerous and could result in a worsening of the wound or amputation.**



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- Wounds can be flushed with tap water or with diluted betadine or chlorhexidine solution if it is available
- Hydrogen peroxide is not recommended for flushing wounds as it can prolong wound healing
- See a vet if:
 - Wound shows underlying muscle or bone
 - Wound is larger than 2 inches long
 - Wound has significant bruising around it
 - Wound has ground-in dirt or hair
 - Wound has been caused by a bite
 - There is a penetrating object stuck in the wound

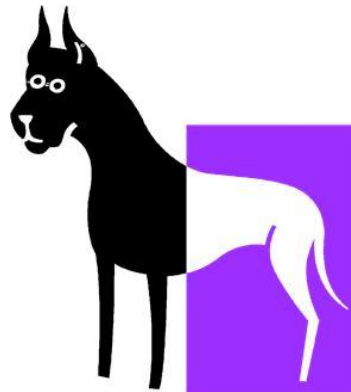
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Bloat

- Gastric dilatation and volvulus (GDV) or 'bloat' is a rapidly progressing life-threatening condition that usually happens to large breed dogs
 - Great Danes are the highest-risk breed for this condition, but other high-risk breeds include German Shepherds, Doberman Pinchers, Standard Poodles and huskies
- Dogs with bloat often have taut, distended abdomens and will often be retching and trying to vomit but not able to bring anything up other than a little bit of saliva. If they do try to drink, they usually vomit up the water
- If you are concerned that your dog has potentially bloated, they should be seen by a veterinarian immediately, as dogs with bloat can die within minutes.





People Foods to Avoid

Chocolate/Coffee/Caffeine

The active ingredient in these foods (methylxanthines) can cause vomiting, diarrhea, incoordination, disruptions in heart rhythms, seizures and potentially death. Darker chocolate is more dangerous than milk or white chocolate.



Alcohol

Food and beverages containing alcohol can cause vomiting, diarrhea, central nervous system depression, breathing difficulty, increased blood acidity and death. Ingestion of bread dough or other fermented food products can also cause alcohol poisoning.

Avocado

The fruit, seeds, bark and leaves of avocado plants contain a compound called persin which can cause vomiting and diarrhea in dogs. Birds and rodents seem to be more sensitive to persin and can develop difficulty breathing, congestion and potentially death.

Macademia Nuts

Within 12 hours of ingestion, macademia nuts can cause vomiting, diarrhea, weakness, depression, joint pain, hind limb weakness, and difficulty getting up.



Grapes and Raisins

Some animals will go into kidney failure after eating grapes or raisins, although the toxic mechanism is unknown. Animals with pre-existing kidney disease are at higher risk of developing problems after eating grapes or raisins.

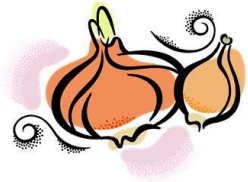
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Onions/Garlic/Chives

These vegetables can cause damage to your pet's red blood cells leading to anemia. Some pets will require repeated blood transfusions to survive if the anemia is severe.



Xylitol

This is an artificial sweetener found in gum, candy and sometimes toothpaste. Xylitol can cause dangerously low blood sugar levels and can also sometimes cause liver failure.

Salt

Some dogs will develop salt poisoning after eating home-made play dough or salty foods like sausage. Salt poisoning can lead to brain swelling and death if not treated properly.

Bread Dough

Dogs who consume raw bread dough can develop alcohol toxicity, as ethanol is a breakdown product of yeast metabolism. Clinical signs include vomiting, incoordination, blindness and severe lethargy.

If you have any concerns that your pet has eaten something poisonous, please call your vet right away before doing anything to induce vomiting, as some compounds are not safe to make animals vomit back up.

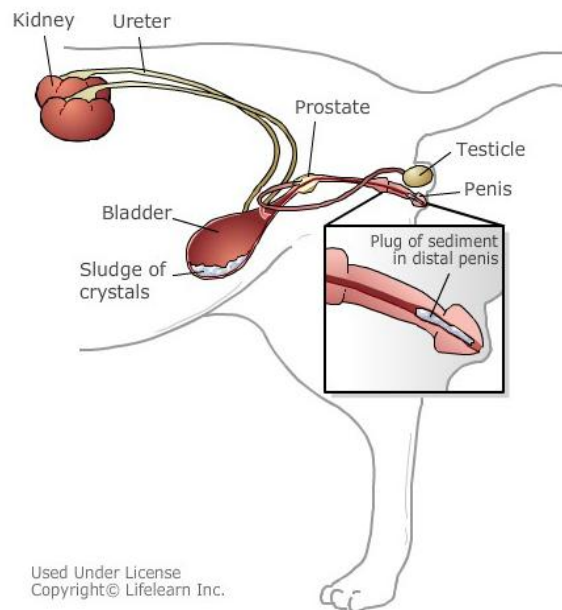
You can also contact the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Centre at 1-888-426-4435. There is a \$65 charge for consultations, but they provide valuable advice about treatment for different types of poisoning.

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Urethral Obstruction

- Male cats can develop a condition where a plug of crystals or mucous can obstruct their urethra and prevent them from urinating
- Signs that a cat may be blocked
 - Straining to urinate but only able to pass a few drops of blood-tinged urine
 - Licking at their penis
 - Repeatedly entering and exiting the litter box
 - Penis may be protruding and purple in colour
 - Painful abdomen
 - Vocalizing in pain
 - Vomiting
 - Lethargy



Any cat that is potentially blocked should be seen by a veterinarian immediately, as this condition is potentially fatal

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Porcupine Quills

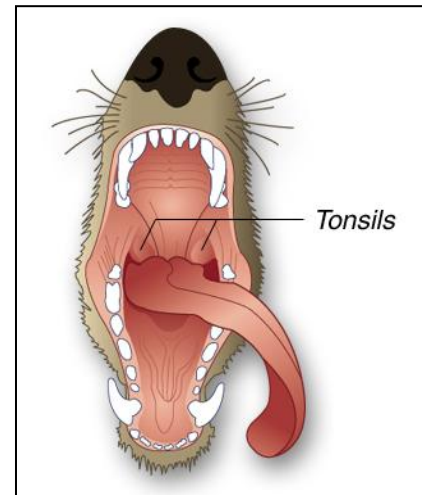
- Animals with porcupine quills will often require sedation or general anesthesia in order to have the quills removed, as removal in an awake animal can be quite painful
- Unfortunately, there are no over-the-counter medications that can be used to safely sedate a dog
- If you are attempting to pull the quills out yourself, grasp the quill firmly with needle-nosed pliers close to the skin, apply pressure to the skin around the quill, and pull the quill out with firm, steady pressure in the opposite direction that the quill entered the body
- If the pet is struggling, this may cause quills to break off and become embedded in the body – any embedded quill can potentially become infected
- Animals will often paw or bite at embedded quills and break them off, so any animal who has been quilled should be closely monitored for the next week to look for signs of swelling or abscesses secondary to embedded quills
- Quills left in the body will soften and become more difficult to remove without breaking and may cause significant tissue swelling, so it is best to remove quills as quickly as possible





Foxtails

- Dogs will often eat foxtail grass and then get the seeds stuck in their tonsils
- Affected dogs are usually retching, hacking and gagging, and sometimes will also vomit up grass
- If you suspect that your dog has foxtails, you can try feeding him a piece of bread with peanut butter, as sometimes this can help pull the foxtails out of the throat and down into the stomach
- Foxtails left in the tonsils can potentially migrate to other areas of the body, causing infection and pain
- Dogs with irritated throats will try to eat grass – this will not help them and will potentially make the throat irritation worse, so keep your dog on a leash outside so that they cannot eat more grass
- If your dog is having difficulty breathing, or if you are concerned that your dog is in distress then you should call your veterinarian



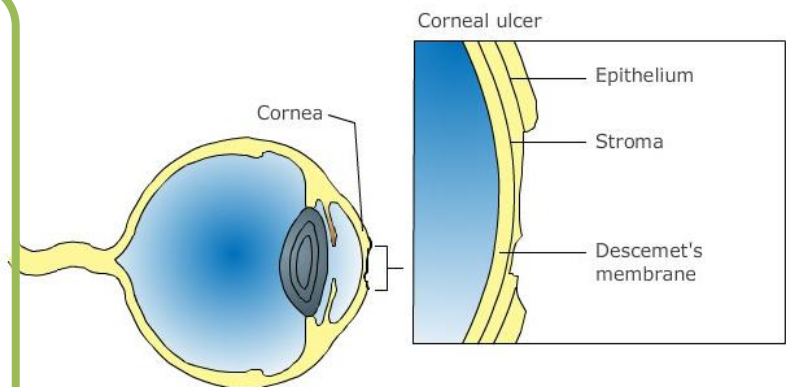


Eye Injuries

- Because eye injuries can progress quickly and sometimes result in permanent blindness, **any eye problems should be seen by a veterinarian immediately**
- Signs to watch for:
 - Redness of the sclera (white part of the eye) or of the tissues around the eye
 - Discharge
 - Squinting
 - Pawing at the eye
 - Cloudiness of the cornea
- If your pet's eye is out of the socket, do not try to put it back in. Cover the eye with a moist cloth and call your veterinarian immediately. Do not put any medication on the eye.
- If there is a penetrating object in your pet's eye, do not try to remove it. Cover the eye with a moist cloth and call your veterinarian immediately.

Diagram of a corneal ulcer, a common type of eye injury in dogs. Corneal ulcers form when the epithelium of the cornea is eroded, exposing the stroma.

Untreated ulcers can penetrate Descemet's membrane and sometimes even cause the eye to rupture. Corneal ulcers are painful, and animals with corneal ulcers usually squint and rub at their eye.



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Diarrhea

- Many pets will develop transient (less than 24 hours) diarrhea in response to stress or eating something inappropriate, such as people food or garbage
- Some dogs will develop diarrhea in response to more serious diseases, such as parasites, liver disease, kidney disease, or inflammatory bowel disease
- Pets who are bright and alert and have a good energy level can be fasted and monitored for 24 hours to see if the diarrhea resolves
- Your pet should see a veterinarian if:
 - There is vomiting accompanying the diarrhea
 - The diarrhea is dark brown to black in colour
 - The diarrhea is bloody
 - Your pet does not want to eat
 - Your pet is lethargic
 - The diarrhea lasts longer than 2-3 days



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Vomiting

- As with diarrhea, many pets will develop transient vomiting in response to stress or eating something inappropriate
- Pets who are bright and alert and have a good energy level can be held off food and monitored for 24 hours after an episode of vomiting to see if it resolves
- Your pet should be seen by a veterinarian if:
 - They vomit more than 2-3 times
 - There is blood in the vomit
 - The vomit resembles coffee grounds
 - You have seen your pet eat string or something string-like
 - There is diarrhea in conjunction with the vomiting
 - They are lethargic
 - Their abdomen appears enlarged
 - Your dog is trying to vomit but is unable to bring anything up (see 'Bloat')



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Limping/Lameness

- Lameness can be caused by a variety of injuries ranging from muscle sprains to dislocations and broken bones

If your pet is unable to bear weight on one of its limbs, or if it is showing signs of shock, call your veterinarian immediately.

- If your pet is bright and alert and they are still able to bear weight on the affected leg, the lameness may improve with rest and no off-leash exercise
- If you suspect that your pet has dislocated a joint or broken a bone, take care not to be bitten or scratched while tending to the pet. You may need to use a blanket to help cover them or a muzzle to prevent bites
- Do not attempt to set the bones or repair a dislocation yourself – this should be done with the pet under heavy sedation or anesthesia
- Do not give your pet any pain medication without speaking to your veterinarian first



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Seizures

- Seizures are uncontrolled movement caused by abnormal brain activity. Seizures may be partial (affecting only one part of the body) or generalized (affecting the whole body)
- Some pets will urinate or defecate while seizing
- Seizures are not painful, but they can be dangerous if they last longer than 5 minutes and can potentially cause brain and/or organ damage
- Seizures can be caused by a variety of medical conditions, including epilepsy, toxins, liver disease, low blood sugar, inflammatory conditions of the brain, and brain tumors
 - In general, animals less than one year old who seizure generally have a birth defect affecting their brain or liver that causes seizures – tiny breed dogs such as Yorkies are especially prone to this
 - Animals between 1-6 years who begin seizing often have epilepsy
 - Animals greater than 7 years of age less frequently have epilepsy and more frequently have other conditions that promote seizures
- If this is the first time that your pet has seized, call your veterinarian to determine whether or not your pet needs to be seen immediately
- If your pet has a history of seizures but is not responding to the prescribed medication, call your veterinarian

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- Try to record the time the seizure begins and the time it ends, as well as what your pet was doing immediately before the seizure and how they acted after
- In animals less than 6 months of age and in toy-breed dogs such as Yorkies or Chihuahuas, seizures are sometimes secondary to low blood sugar, so you can try rubbing a small amount of pancake syrup on their gums and then call your veterinarian immediately





Difficulty Breathing

- Respiratory distress can be identified by increased effort to breathe, noisy or squeaky breathing, blueness of the tongue or mucous membranes
- In cats, open-mouthed breathing or panting is almost always a sign of severe respiratory distress
- Choking is interference with breathing caused by a foreign object in the trachea or external pressure on the trachea
- Choking is rare in pets, and it is important to distinguish coughing from choking
 - With coughing, pets are able to inhale normally
 - With choking, pets having difficulty inhaling or are unable to inhale, and will often have blue or purple-tinged tongues
- You can potentially injure your pet by trying to perform first aid for choking if it is coughing
- If you have any concerns that your pet is choking, call your veterinarian immediately

If Your Pet is Unconscious

- Open your pet's mouth and sweep your finger towards the back of the throat going over the base of the tongue to see if you can feel a foreign object and sweep it towards the centre of the mouth
- You can attempt to do the Heimlich maneuver by placing your pet on their back, placing your hands on their abdomen near the bottom of their ribcage, and then gently but firmly thrusting towards the spine

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Frostbite

- Prolonged exposure to cold can cause damage to exposed tissue.
- Extremities, including the ears, tail, scrotum, prepuce, and mammary glands are most commonly affected
- Frozen tissue will be cool, pale, and non-responsive to stimulation
- Thawed tissue that still has blood circulation will be red, painful and scaly
- Dead tissue may be dark purple to black in colour
- Thawed tissue that dies will fall off, exposing deeper tissue layers
- Affected body parts should be re-warmed quickly in body temperature water (30°-42° C or 102°-107° F) – paws and limbs can be immersed in water, and other areas can have warm wet towels applied
 - Do not use direct heat such as fire or heating pads as these can potentially burn skin before feeling returns
 - Do not rewarm an affected area if there is a chance it may re-freeze again, as the freeze-thaw cycle is very harmful to tissue
 - Do not rub or massage the frostbitten tissue, as this may increase the severity of the tissue damage
- If your pet's body temperature is below 37.0°C, call your veterinarian immediately, as your pet may be hypothermic

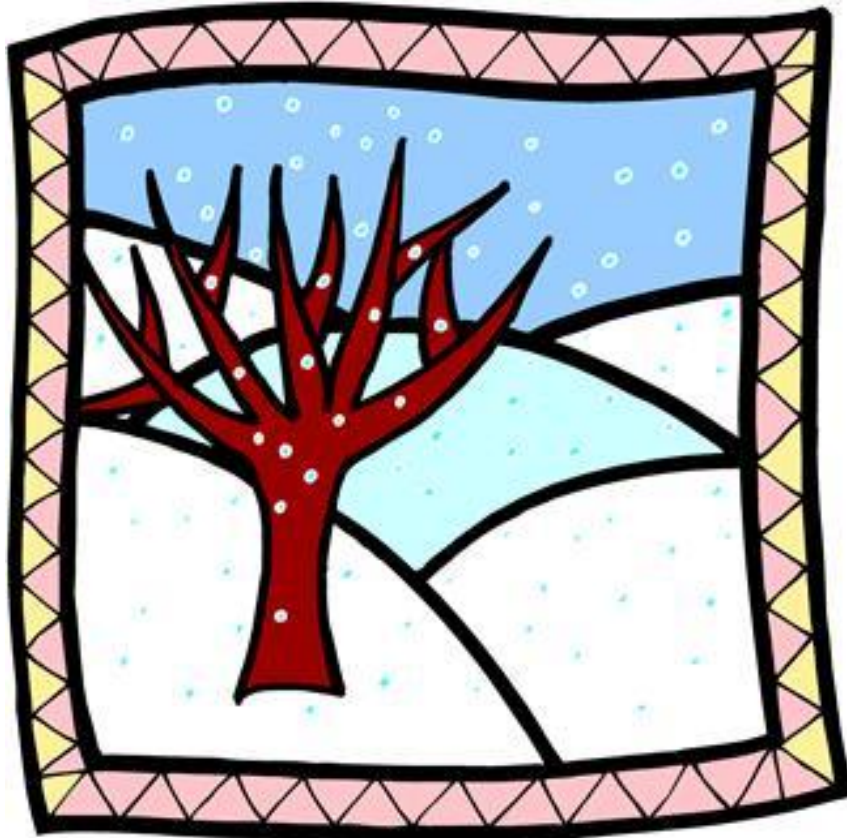


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- If you suspect your pet has frostbite, call your veterinarian, as your pet will probably require pain medication and/or antibiotics to help them during their recovery
- Do not give your pet any pain medication without speaking to a veterinarian first
- It may take several days to determine the full extent of tissue damage secondary to frostbite, as severely damaged tissue may look normal initially
- Coats and boots designed for dogs can help protect against frostbite
- Some coats designed for sled dogs include areas to attach fleece to provide protection to the penis and scrotum



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Heatstroke

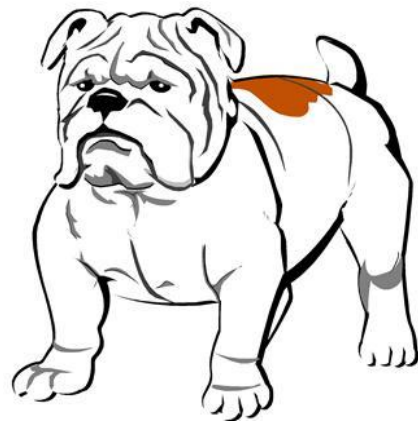


- Heatstroke is a serious health condition where a dog's body temperature rises beyond their ability to regulate it
- Heatstroke is less common in the Yukon than in warmer parts of Canada
- Dogs with thick haircoats (such as Newfoundland dogs), short faces (such as Bulldogs and Pugs) and overweight dogs are more prone to suffering from heatstroke
- Heatstroke most commonly occurs in hot summer weather when animals are left in vehicles without adequate ventilation
- Signs that an animal has heatstroke:
 - Panting and restlessness
 - Drooling
 - Weakness and incoordination
 - Red to purple coloured gums
 - Coma, seizing and death in severe cases
- If you suspect your pet has heatstroke:
 - Take the rectal temperature – **temperature; greater than 43 °C (109 °F) are critical and require immediate veterinary attention**
 - Temperatures greater than 39.5 °C (102.5 °F) require cooling and should be seen by a veterinarian
 - Wet your pet down with cool (not ice cold) water and have the air conditioner on and the windows down in the vehicle while driving to the veterinary hospital
 - Do not use ice cold water or ice packs to cool your pet



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- Monitor your pet's temperature every 5-10 minutes (every 2 minutes for pets less than 20 lbs) and stop active cooling once your pet's temperature drops below 39.5°C
 - Overcooling your pet can result in hypothermia
- Heatstroke is a very serious condition, and animals can suffer severe organ damage and blood clotting problems even if their temperature is brought back down to normal





Difficult Birth

- If your pet is pregnant, you should ensure that you are familiar and comfortable with the whelping/queening process well before the due date
- X-rays taken around 6 weeks after the breeding date can help you know how many puppies/kittens to expect, which will allow you to know when the mother has finished giving birth
- Puppies and kittens are both born approximately 63 days after the breeding date, but this can vary by up to a week, so this number should only be used as a guideline
- When to contact a veterinarian:
 - If your pet has been actively having contractions for more than 30 minutes without producing a puppy/kitten
 - If you can see that there is a puppy/kitten or a fluid bubble stuck in the birth canal for more than 10 minutes
 - If there is green discharge from the vagina without a puppy or kitten being born
 - Bleeding from the vagina for more than 10 minutes
- Many difficult births result in Caesarean sections, which can be expensive and stressful for your pet. You should be financially and emotionally prepared to have a C-section done if you have a pregnant pet



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- Some new mothers can develop a condition called eclampsia if their blood calcium levels drop too low. This can occur anytime after birth, but occurs most commonly 2-4 weeks after birth when their milk production is very high. Signs of eclampsia include weakness, fever, tremoring and seizures. You can help prevent eclampsia by feeding your pet a high quality puppy or kitten food beginning 2 weeks before the due date and continuing until the puppies/kittens are weaned.



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Final Thoughts

There are many other types of emergencies that can and will occur. If you have any concerns about symptoms your pet is exhibiting, call your veterinarian.

Veterinary care in general, and emergency and critical care in particular, can place a heavy and sometimes unexpected financial burden on families. It's a good idea to either have pet insurance or a financial plan in place in case your pet requires emergency care. Do not be afraid to openly discuss finances with your pet's veterinary hospital to help with the decision making process.

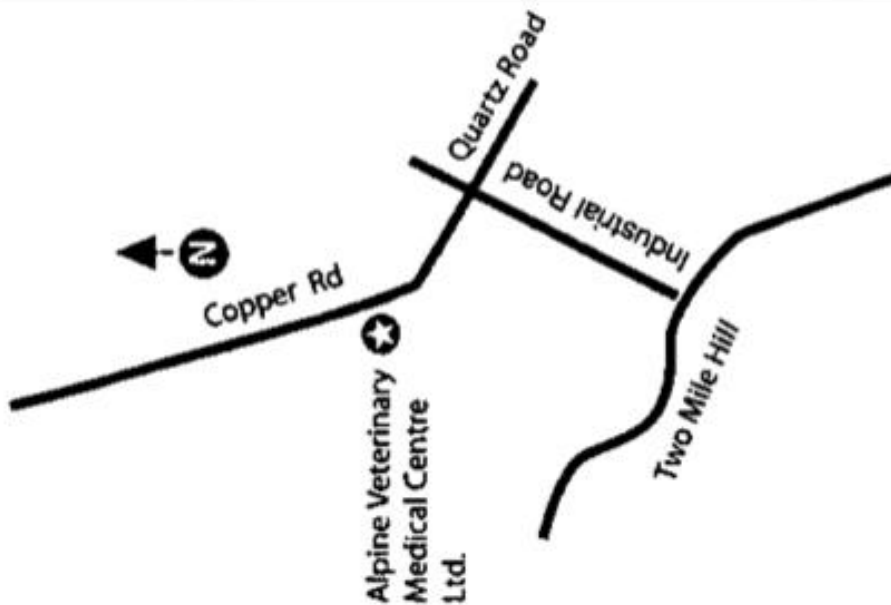
Yearly exams can help identify health problems before they become emergencies, and spaying, neutering and routine vaccines can help prevent serious health issues.

Please speak with your veterinarian if you have any questions or concerns regarding the topics in this manual.

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