

Pet First Aid - A Prepared Pet Owner is a Responsible Pet Owner

Nobody likes to think that the great outdoors could be dangerous for your canine companion. There's no substitute for quality veterinary care; however, with a little training in basic pet first aid and the right tools on hand you can provide relief and comfort to your furry friend in the event of an

emergency until you can get to a vet. To find a training course near you, visit the websites of the American Red Cross at www.redcross.org or Pet Tech at www.pettech.net.

The best thing to do in any situation is to keep your head, remain calm and have a system for responding to the situation.

When you take a pet first aid course, you will learn a few basic techniques. Performing the *Primary Pet Assessment-ABCs* takes approximately 15 to 25 seconds and will direct you to your next course of action.

- ♦ Airway - if unconscious and unresponsive, call for help.
- ♦ Breathing - check for breathing.
- ♦ Circulation - check for circulation at the femoral pulse. If there is no pulse, begin CPR.

CPR, or Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation, is much the same for your dog as for people. It is

externally compressing the heart to facilitate circulatory function and mechanically inflating the lungs to mimic respiratory function. To perform CPR:

- ♦ Pull the tongue out past the canines (teeth) with your fingers.



Bebe Plays Fetch at Black Moshannon State Park

*2013 Parks & Forests Thru the Seasons Photo Contest
First Place, Dogs in the Outdoors
Photo by Tamie Dickson*

- ♦ Grasp the pet's snout firmly and compress the lips and mouth together, holding the muzzle firmly shut.
- ♦ Place your mouth and lips over the pet's nose, making an airtight seal. Give the pet two slow full breaths, taking care not to over-ventilate him. Watch for chest to rise.
- ♦ Give 15 compressions.
- ♦ Continue compressions and breaths for about one minute and then reassess.

Shock is defined as the lack of an adequate supply of oxygen to body tissues. It is characterized

by weak but rapid shallow breathing, confusion, pale gums and weakness. A pet in shock may be conscious or unconscious. Transport to the veterinarian as soon as possible.

Even when taking a short hike it is a good idea to have some basics available. These basics will fit in your daypack, with a more complete first aid kit in the car. Check the kits regularly to replace missing items and make sure that items have not expired.

Backpack first aid kit:

- ◆ 4" square gauze pads
- ◆ Cling type bandaging tapes
- ◆ Topical disinfectant cream
- ◆ Tweezers
- ◆ Styptic powder to clot blood from a torn or broken nail
- ◆ Pocket knife (this is also useful if the leash gets tangled in vines and you need to cut it loose)
- ◆ Flashlight
- ◆ Water
- ◆ Veterinarian's phone number

Portable car first aid kit:

- ◆ Adhesive bandages in several sizes
- ◆ Adhesive tape
- ◆ Alcohol wipes or ethyl alcohol
- ◆ Antibiotic cream
- ◆ Antiseptic solution
- ◆ Benadryl
- ◆ Blanket or old beach towel
- ◆ Calamine lotion
- ◆ Cotton balls
- ◆ Disposable instant cold packs
- ◆ Elastic bandage
- ◆ Emergency phone numbers
- ◆ Eye wash
- ◆ Hand sanitizer
- ◆ Hydrocortisone cream
- ◆ Safety pins
- ◆ Scissors
- ◆ Sterile gauze
- ◆ Syringe
- ◆ Thermometer (rectal)
- ◆ Muzzle
- ◆ Pet emergency pocket guide

Some Common Injuries and Suggested First Aid Treatment:

Sprains and Strains are perhaps the most common injuries a dog may suffer. A sprain is an injury involving a ligament (the tissue that connects bones to bones or bones to muscles). A strain is an injury to a muscle.

First aid:

- ◆ Three or four times daily, for 5 to 15 minutes each time, apply either a cold compress (ice pack or chemical cold pack) or a warm compress to the injured area. Alternate warm and cold, using warm for one application, then cold for the next. Place a towel between the compresses and the skin
- ◆ Restrict exercise. Keep the animal in a small closed confined area; walk on a leash only to defecate and urinate.

If there is no improvement in 24 hours, or if injury worsens, seek veterinary attention. An X-ray will make sure there are no fractures or torn ligaments. Never give aspirin or any other over-the-counter pain reliever to your pet unless your veterinarian prescribes them. They may be very toxic!

Abrasions can afflict man's best friend as easily as they afflict us. Abrasions are scrapes to the top layers of skin.

First aid:

- ◆ Wash your hands and wear latex gloves if possible.

- ◆ Apply sterile, water-soluble lubricant to the area so hair does not contaminate the wound.

- ◆ Wash the wound with water or solution to remove any dirt or debris from the wound surface.

If the abrasion is larger than a quarter, seems painful, does not seem to heal or you are not certain how deep or how severe the abrasion is, take your pet to the veterinary hospital.

Insect bites like bee stings and spider bites are most common in dogs during the warmer months.

Insects often sting the soft, less hairy areas of your pet, such as the nose and feet.

First aid:

- ◆ If the face and neck are swollen, check your ABCs or perform CPR if your pet cannot breathe.
- ◆ Check for signs of shock.
- ◆ Check the area to see if stinger is still present. The stinger may be very small and often black in color. If you find it, brush it off with a firm object, such as your fingernail or a credit card. Do not attempt to pick it out like an ordinary splinter, as this may cause more release of toxin.
- ◆ Apply a paste of baking soda and water if available.
- ◆ Apply cold or ice packs, wrapped in a towel, to the swollen area.
- ◆ Transport to a veterinary hospital.



Molson Golden Models the Latest in Splint Fashions

Photo by Bernetta Dougert

It may be appropriate to give the animal the over-the-counter antihistamine Benadryl (diphenhydramine) IF you have spoken to your veterinarian in advance and have received approval.

Only give oral medication if your pet is conscious, able to breathe and not vomiting! **Only** give Benadryl if you have spoken to your veterinarian in advance.

Burns from a campfire or dropped pot of hot water are a potentially serious injury risk for dogs. Burns are classified based on severity: the severity of burn is based upon how deep the burn is and the extent of the body burned. Superficial burns that are extensive can be quite dangerous, as can deep burns that are limited in the area they affect. Severe burns can lead to shock and place the animal at risk for significant infection and possible death.

First aid:

- ◆ Check for the signs of shock in the case of deep or extensive burns.
- ◆ Cool water should be applied as soon as possible. This decreases pain and may decrease the penetration of heat further into the tissues. You can immerse the animal in a cool bath, provided the burn involves only one part of the body.

- ◆ If more than one part of the body is affected, do not immerse

your pet. Instead, run cold water directly over the areas or place cool compresses on the areas. Immersing the animal with extensive burns may cool the skin too quickly and cause shock.

- ◆ Place a sterile non-stick pad or clean moist cloth over the burned area to keep it clean. Do not place any ointments, butter or petroleum jelly on burns.
- ◆ Take the animal to a veterinary hospital immediately.

Pad wounds may cause significant bleeding due to the number of blood vessels in the pad. Due to their location and function, they are often injured. The most common cause is stepping on a sharp object, such as a thorn.

First aid:

- ◆ Remove any obvious foreign object.
- ◆ Wash the area with saline solution and completely dry the foot.
- ◆ Place a non-stick pad or gauze sponge over the wound.

- ◆ Wrap the paw with gauze; make sure the bandage is not too tight.
- ◆ Transport to a veterinary hospital so the wound can be assessed.

Lacerations result from blunt trauma and can cut into deeper tissue. Everything from barbed wire to branches can cause lacerations while your dog trots down the trail. Lacerations are wounds that cut the skin through to the deeper underlying layers. They may be deep enough to involve underlying veins, arteries, nerves, ligaments, muscles, tendons or even bone.

First aid:

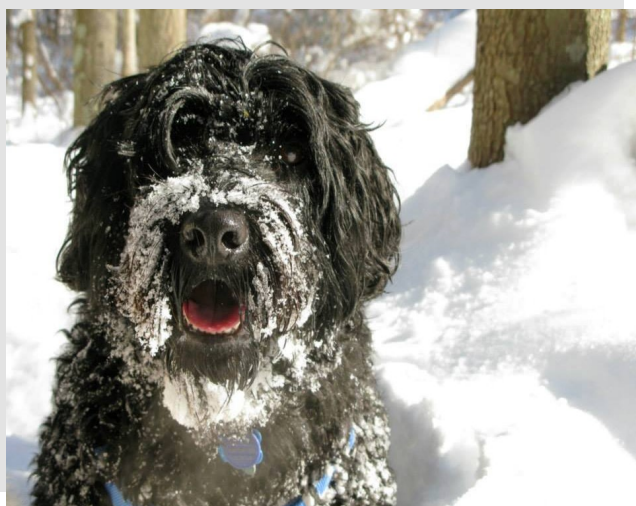
- ◆ If profuse bleeding is occurring, do not attempt to clean the wound, as you will encourage more bleeding. Instead, stop the bleeding.
- ◆ Cover the area with a clean cloth and transport to a veterinary hospital.
- ◆ If not bleeding excessively, clean the wound and then transport to a veterinary hospital.

Some Not-So-Common Injuries and Suggested First Aid Treatment:

Heat stroke or hyperthermia occurs when an animal gets severely overheated, most commonly in the summer months. Dogs don't have sweat glands so they can only dispel heat by panting and through the pads of their feet. Make sure your pets have plenty of cool water and shade during hot weather.

First aid:

- ◆ You must cool the pet because it will not be able to pant and cool itself.
- ◆ Place water-soaked towels on the head, neck, feet, chest and abdomen.



Django is a Water Dog BUT He Enjoys the Snow at Ridley Creek State Park

*2013 Parks & Forests Thru the Seasons Photo Contest
Second Place, Dogs in the Outdoors
Photo by Thomas Caldwell*

- ◆ Take the dog to the nearest veterinary hospital

Frost nip and frostbite is the freezing of the skin and tissues. Areas most commonly affected are the ears, paws and tail, caused by extreme or prolonged exposure to low temperatures.

First aid:

- ◆ Frost nipped parts should be



Duke Loves Snow! (at Caledonia State Park)

*2013 Parks & Forests Thru the Seasons Photo Contest
Winner, Critics' Choice
Photo by Carrie Datson*

warmed slowly with wet towels.

- ◆ Do not squeeze or rub the affected area as this will be extremely painful for the pet.
- ◆ Frostbite requires immediate attention by a veterinarian or emergency animal hospital to prevent further pain and ward off infection.

Fractures are breaks in the bone. They may occur in one part of the bone, or there may be multiple breaks in the bone or multiple bones involved. Fractures can have smooth, clean surfaces or have splinters and fragments.

First aid:

- ◆ Keep your pet as quiet and calm as possible.
- ◆ Check the ABCs of CPR; administer CPR as needed.
- ◆ Restrain and muzzle the pet; special care should be taken in handling the pet because of the increased risk of being bitten. The pet will be in extreme pain as you immobilize their injury.
- ◆ Immobilize the limb as it is found. Find something that will function as a splint (piece of wood, rolled up magazine or newspaper). Carefully place the splint under the injured limb.
- ◆ Begin applying the rolled gauze just above the injured joint and continue wrapping until splint is securely in place. Be careful not to wrap too tightly.
- ◆ Transport the pet to the nearest emergency animal hospital or veterinarian immediately.

Drowning is unusual as dogs are generally good swimmers. However, a boating accident, swimming too far out and getting fatigued or a muscle cramp, falling through thin ice, or falling into water from which they cannot escape pose a risk. Taking your pet on a canoe? Make sure your pet wears a life preserver made especially for animals and don't leave your pet unattended or without access to shade.

[Visit our website and click on Events, Contests & Awards for a link to all the winners in our 2013 Parks & Forests Thru the Seasons Photo Contest](#)

First aid:

- ◆ For unconscious small dogs, hold the animal upside

down by the hind legs to allow water to come out the nose or mouth.

- ◆ For unconscious larger dogs, lift the hind legs off the ground with the front legs resting on the ground so gravity can help expel the water.
- ◆ Lay the animal on either side, with the head slightly lowered.
- ◆ Check the ABCs of CPR; administer CPR as needed.
- ◆ Place a blanket around the animal.
- ◆ Transport to a veterinary hospital immediately. Even if you revive your pet, examination by a veterinarian is still necessary because fluid buildup in the lungs, as well as the effects of hypothermia, may result.

After hiking, carefully examine your dog for signs of injury, fleas and ticks, or harmful debris such as thorns or slivers of glass. Look at each paw, especially the pads and between the toes. Look in the ears; run your hand over his entire body and use a comb through his coat to look for bumps on the skin or thorns, etc.

Not every pet is a natural athlete. After consulting with your veterinarian, find activities your pet enjoys and start an exercise program slowly. Before you set off for a long hike with your dog, it's important to work them up to a reasonable level of fitness.

We hope this is information you never need to use. But it is better to be prepared! That way you truly can enjoy being outside hiking, camping, boating, and just having fun.

~Bernetta Dougert & Molson Golden

