

# **Puppy First Aid Basics**

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We all hope that we are never confronted with a serious injury as the result of an accident. Unfortunately, the unexpected can occur at any time and we should all be prepared to act quickly and effectively. The most important thing in any emergency situation is to STAY CALM. Our dogs get their cues from us. If we are calm in an emergency they may well react in a better manner. Familiarize yourself with the procedures outlined here. Be prepared to control bleeding, check respirations, treat for shock and prepare for transport to your veterinarian.

Post your veterinarian's phone number with all of your other emergency numbers. List your veterinarian's number in your cellular phone (if applicable). Be familiar with your veterinarian's procedures in the event of an emergency and if an emergency were to happen after business hours. Determine if there are emergency animal care facilities in your area.

All puppy and dog owners should consider purchasing a book on puppy/dog first aid. There are several good books on the market to choose from:

- Emergency Care for Dogs and Cats - First Aid for Your Pet by Dr. Cranton Burkholder, D.V.M., MA.
- Dog Owner's Home Veterinary Handbook by Delbert G. Carlson, DVM and James M. Griffin M.D. (offered in the Bridgeport Equipment catalog) \*Highly recommended
- Puppy Owner's Veterinary Care Book by James De Biletto, D.V.M.
- Dog Owner's Veterinary Guide by G. W. Starn
- Emergency First Aid for Dogs by Sheldon Rubin, D.V.M.
- Complete Book of Dog Care by Leon F. Whitney D.V.M.; revised by George D. Whitney D.V.M.

## **First Aid Kit Recommended Items**

Every dog owner should have a dog-specific First Aid Kit. The First Aid Kit should contain those items you might require in a medical emergency. The following is a sample of recommended items:

Rectal Thermometer	Blanket(s) to keep dog warm
Neosporin Ointment (never use pain reliever form)	KY Jelly
Sterile Dressings	Eye Ointment
Gauze (non-sterile)	Saline Solution (for eyes)
Adhesive Tape (for binding dressings)	Table Salt
Sanitary Napkins (bleeding control)	Scissors
Kaopectate and Pepto-Bismol (check expiration)	Buffered Aspirin
Lidocaine Spray (and/or ointment)	Bag Balm
Rubbing Alcohol	Muzzle
Hydrogen Peroxide	Distilled (or sterilized) Water

Have all these items together and keep them in a container set aside for emergencies; a lunch box, a tackle box, or a hard plastic box, work well. Make other responsible family members aware of the First Aid Kit and where it's located in your home.

Your veterinary professional is the best source of assistance and can advise you on taking the following vitals. The following are items that you can discuss with your veterinarian at your next visit:

- How to take your dog's temperature.
- How and where to take your dog's pulse.
- The normal pulse rate and strength for your dog.
- Normal respiration for your dog (taking into account age, size, and breed). Correct CPR technique for the age and size of your dog.

Also, familiarize yourself with your dog's normal gum color. Press the gums and observe the amount of time it takes for the color to return in your healthy dog to help you recognize when your dog is in medical distress.

### **Taking Your Dog's Temperature**

A dog's temperature is taken rectally and normally runs from 100.0 to 102.5 degrees Fahrenheit (average temperature is 101.3 to 101.5). If you are unsure on how to do this properly, on your next visit have your veterinarian or veterinary technician show you. Sometimes, taking your dog's temperature can be a two-person operation. One person handles the thermometer while the other restrains the dog.

### **Your Dog's Pulse Rate**

Your dog's pulse rate can be found at the femoral artery located in the inner thigh. Pulse rate is usually 60 -160 beats per minute. Smaller dogs have a faster pulse rate than large dogs. Have your veterinarian or veterinary technician show you how to take a standardized pulse rate and advise you on the normal rate for your dog. Familiarize yourself with the normal pulse rate and the feel of a normal pulse prior to a medical emergency.

### **Muzzling Your Dog**

In an emergency there are many items that would work suitably to serve as a muzzle. Even the most placid, friendly and accepting of dogs may nip or try to bite when injured due to fear or pain. An injured dog may even try to bite his/her owner making emergency measures difficult. If you are treating for an injury not requiring CPR or resuscitation, a muzzle is recommended.

If you do not have a properly fitted muzzle for your dog, you can use a necktie, knee-high nylons, kerchief, belt, or scarf. Do not tie the makeshift muzzle too tight as to cause damage to the dog's nose; at the same time make sure the muzzle is secure.

### **Controlling Bleeding**

Apply direct pressure to the wound with a gauze pad or sanitary napkin. Bleeding from most superficial wounds can be stopped in this manner. Resist the temptation to remove the pressure and look at the wound, the bleeding could start again. Once the gauze, cloth, or sanitary napkin becomes saturated replace it with a fresh one. If bleeding is heavy and the dog appears in shock (see below), muscle tissue is exposed, or the blood is dark in color or spurting call and transport to a vet or veterinary emergency facility immediately. Contact a veterinarian for additional instructions.

If you are unsure whether your dog requires medical assistance, transport him/her to the veterinarian as soon as possible. Two people are required for this, one to drive and one to maintain pressure on the wound and attempt to restrain and soothe the dog.

A tourniquet should only be applied when direct pressure cannot control the bleeding because there is a possibility of severe tissue damage from lack of blood circulation. The tourniquet should be placed about two inches above the wound (between the wound and the heart) and should be released every 10 minutes or so to allow the blood to reach other tissues. You should be able to get a finger in under the tourniquet and the wound may seep slightly. Remember a tourniquet is a last resort and should be done under the advisement of your veterinarian.

### **Signs of Internal Bleeding**

- Shock (see below).
- Coughing up blood may be a sign of injury to the lungs/respiratory system. . Bloody vomit may be a sign of internal injury to the digestive tract.
- Tar-like stools can indicate the lower digestive tract is bleeding. Signs of internal bleeding should be taken seriously and immediate action will be required.

## Signs of Shock

Shock means that the blood circulation in the body is not sufficient. Any dog that has suffered a serious injury may experience shock. Poisoning, electrical shock, blood loss, drowning, and severe vomiting and diarrhea can cause a dog to go into shock. One way to help determine if shock is a possibility is to press your finger against the dog's gums above the teeth line. If the gums and lips are very pale and/or the blood returns very slowly to the depressed area, the dog is possibly going into or already in shock. The pulse may be weak and rapid. The pupils may be dilated and the dog may then become unconsciousness.

- Calm and reassure your dog.
- Check breathing and airway for obstruction, begin CPR if necessary. . Control bleeding.
- Keep the dog warm (if in shock or bleeding).
- Transport to veterinary hospital or emergency care facility.

## Poison Treatment

Each poison is treated differently depending on the type of poison. Keep your local (or the national) Poison Control Center's Hotline number with all your other emergency numbers. Treatment can range from inducing vomiting to the prevention of vomiting depending on the type of poison.

Contact your veterinary professional for immediate assistance in reacting to a potential poisoning. You must be prepared to advise them of the poison and amount ingested before treatment can be recommended. Be prepared to transport your dog to the vet after first aid.

## What should be done if an animal has been poisoned?

Immediately call the National Animal Poison Control Center and be ready to provide the following:

1. Your name, address, and phone number
2. Information concerning the exposure (the amount of agent, the time since exposure, etc.)
3. The species, breed, age, sex, weight, and number of animals involved.
4. The agent your animal has been exposed to, if known; and
5. The problems or symptoms your animal is experiencing.

### Then call the National Animal Poison Control Center (NAPCC)

# 1900-680-0000 or 1-800-548-2423

Located at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the National Animal Poison Control Center (NAPCC) is a non-profit service of the University of Illinois. It is the first animal-oriented poison center in the United States. Since 1978, it has provided advice to animal owners and conferred with veterinarians about poisoning exposures.

Licensed veterinarians and board-certified veterinary toxicologists answer the NAPCC's phones. Depending on which option is chosen, the charge is \$20.00 for the first five minutes, then \$2.95/minute thereafter when using the 900 number. If you use the 800 number, the charge is \$30.00 per case (VISA, MasterCard, Discover, or American Express *only*). With the 800 access, **only** the NAPCC will do as many follow-up calls as necessary in critical cases and, if you wish, will consult with your veterinarian.