



CAT FIRST AID

INTRODUCTION

This course is based on the American Red Cross Cat & Dog materials available via the Red Cross Mobile App (information/link below). Additional information from other publications has been added for your knowledge and professionalism.

Mobile Apps

Download FREE Red Cross Mobile Apps today, in the Apple App Store or Google Play

Click on the link below which will take you to a 'Mobile Apps' section of the American Red Cross, including the "Pet First Aid" App. You can get the App on Google Play for free. Or text: "GETPET" to 90999, to get the free download.

<http://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/mobile-apps>

1.KEEP YOUR CAT HEALTHY

- It is imperative that your cat be seen by a **veterinarian annually**, if not more often. While the AVMA is no longer recommending some annual vaccinations, an annual physical may prevent future health problems. A **vaccine schedule** should be discussed with your veterinarian based on benefit and risk to your pet. Blood testing may reveal an illness that may have gone unnoticed by the pet parent.
- Proper **diet** and **exercise** will aid in pet health and obesity prevention.
- Proper **shelter** is a necessity. The lifespan of an indoor cat is approximately 16-17 years compared to 3-4 years as an outdoor cat.
- **Grooming and parasite removal/prevention** should be a basic part of cat care.

- **Spaying /neutering** will provide for a decrease in the pet overpopulation problem, and, it will prevent breast and testicular cancers. Neutering a pet does not make it fat or lazy. Over feeding and/or lack of exercise is the culprit.
- **Identification** is truly a must for all pets – whether kept in the house or outside. Collars, tags, microchips or tattoos all are a voice for your lost pet.
- **Transporting** a pet can be tricky. Best practice is **always** transport in a carrier, for your safety as well as the cats. When traveling, always use temporary tags attached to a collar or harness, with the address where you are presently staying.

NAPPS NOTE: As a professional pet sitter you should have a written up-to-date record of all vaccinations and medications for each animal in your care. A pet sitter may be able to inform a client about an alternative diet or proper amount to feed to better serve the animal.

During the initial visit it should be mandatory to see the area in which the pet will be kept. A safe, secure and seasonably comfortable environment is a necessity for pet safety as well as pet sitter liability.

When transporting any cat, make sure it is in a crate or carrier which is secured with a seatbelt, within the car, with the windows closed. Never transport a cat loose in the car as that cat could become a flying missile in the event of a quick stop or auto accident. Never hold a cat in your arms as a collision would cause airbag inflation thus possibly killing the cat. If in your arms at the time of a collision the cat would likely be killed between the steering wheel and your body. The cat also could be ejected through an open window.

Pet proof your client's environment. Remove anything hazardous (ex. medicines and pet toxic foods) .

2. GIVING YOUR CAT MEDICATIONS

Wrapping a fearful cat in a towel allows for a safer and perhaps less stressful way of medicating, both for the cat and the person administering the Rx.

Many medications come in both liquid and pill form. Ask for the product which is easier for you to administer.

Familiarize yourself with foods which affect cats adversely.

NEVER give a medication prescribed for one cat to another cat without first consulting a veterinarian and the cat pet parent.

NAPPS NOTE: *NEVER administer a medication without the written permission/documentation of the cat's parent or veterinarian. This notation should then be kept in the client's/pet's file. Any changes in Rx should also be noted by the pet parent in a written, dated note. Keep files up-to-date. **Read the label** to be sure the name on the medication and dosage are directed to the pet you are treating. A cat muzzle might be valuable for administering medications when the nose or mouth is not involved. Familiarize yourself with the different sizes of pill guns. Remember the faster the medication is given – the less stress to the caregiver and the pet.*

3. BE PREPARED

First Aid Kit

- The following list of supplies may be helpful to add large plastic bags, kitchen and garbage can size. These may be used if an animal is bleeding or has lost control of bladder or bowels and you need to transport. They are also helpful in holding body heat. A king size pillow case may be used to confine an injured cat or as a carrier if one is not available. You might also find a use for large safety pins, an old clean t-shirt, plastic wrap, panty hose, scissors and duct tape (remembering that it only sticks well to itself).
- A bottle of water, towel, cohesive wrap bandage, hand sanitizer, and a loud whistle to call for help are a few other items that might be incorporated in your kit. Add chop sticks or tongue depressors for splinting and a pen and paper for note taking.
- A board should be kept in your car for emergency transport. It need not be large or heavy as luan or ¼ inch thick plywood, is light weight and extremely strong. Have some type of sheeting strips or ties that would reach around both the board and the cat.
- Don't forget the list of emergency phone numbers.
- The American Red Cross sells Pet First Aid Kits or you can just stock one easily from your local pharmacy or retail store.

NAPPS NOTE: *As a PROFESSIONAL pet sitter you should have a **FIRST AID KIT** readily available at all times in your car. Remember to update and replace items in your kit regularly. Check the expiration dates on all contents, especially*

ointments and liquids. Be sure excessive heat or cold hasn't damaged any other materials.

- It is important to have the following emergency phone numbers at hand – in your home – in your car and easily accessible while you are pet sitting. You may have memorized all these important numbers; however, in an emergency those numbers may escape your recall. Be safe and have the following list readily available at each client's home.
- The list should include: client's veterinarian, 24-hour vet clinic, ASPCA Animal Poison Control Hotline, Humane Society, Animal Shelter, and Animal Control. It might be beneficial to have the name and number of someone who could assist in a crisis if needed. Keep a file card with the numbers in your first aid kit as it could save valuable time. While you may be tending an emergency, someone else may be able to take the card and call for help or contact a clinic about an incoming injured pet.
- We never know when an accident might occur, and a list of helpful numbers is our first step in preparedness.

Disaster Preparedness should be on the minds of all pet parents as well as pet sitters. There is much valuable information on pages 17-20 of the American Red Cross Cat First Aid book. Make a plan for the pets in your home as well as for those in your care. Be informed as to what is available in your community. Begin today – do not wait until disaster strikes.

NAPPS NOTE: As a professional pet sitter you should discuss with each client an agreed upon plan in case of disaster. This information should be readily available in the client's file. Remind clients that those that have followed your guidelines regarding preparation and emergency kits will be served first.

NAPPS Disaster Preparedness committee has done an excellent job providing you as a NAPPS member with all the vital information you might need to begin preparedness for your clients. This information is offered as a valuable segment to the annual NAPPS conference. The information is also available for reference and to download from the “members only” section of the NAPPS website.

4. WHAT'S NORMAL

Do not wait for an emergency to try to figure out what is normal for your cat. Your cat or your client's cat cannot speak. You must be the communicator of his or her **normals** to compare with the readings in an emergency. **Chart all of your own pets.** Document the breed, age, sex, and weight of each. Include temperature, pulse, respiration, and (CRT) capillary refill time.

*NAPPS NOTE: Although not required, it would also be ideal to chart, with each client, the **normals** for their pet. Documenting would demonstrate your proficiency for animal health and might also educate the client. You might wish to keep a list of what is generally NORMAL in your first aid kit. Remember the size and breed influence.*

Temperature	100-103
Pulse	160-240 beats per minute
Respiration	20-30 breaths per minute
Capillary Refill Time	1-3 seconds

Check for dehydration: pick up the skin over the shoulder area and watch for quick spring back. If the skin slowly recedes or stays elevated the cat is considered dehydrated.

In checking the gums, seek veterinary treatment if yellow, blue, brown, or red.

NAPPS NOTE: Documenting the normals for your pet or your client's pet are important. You will note that the book and the video differ somewhat in the normal range for cats. These rates can vary depending on the breed, age and the activity levels of a specific breed or a specific cat. Kitten rates will be much higher than a geriatric cat.

NAPPS NOTE: It is recommended to use a digital thermometer. If only a rectal glass thermometer is available, use extreme care. Better to let the thermometer loose than to hold tight and have it break off in the rectum. If the glass thermometer breaks, use gloves to clear the glass and the mercury spill. This is considered toxic waste and should be disposed of in a safe and approved manner.

5. RESTRAINT

- Care must be taken to restrain a cat without further injury to the cat or yourself. Approach a cat slowly and quietly. Speak softly or make a

repetitive noise such as purring or clicking. A towel, coat, blanket, or pillow case may be used to safely restrain a cat. Take care to leave any injured limb exposed, but well supported.

- Manual restraint is probably the fastest and safest when approaching a cat that is able to escape. Approach the cat from the rear, speaking softly. Grab the scruff of the neck, high toward the head, and hold tightly. This can actually cause a relaxation response through endorphins being released in the cat's system. (This is why kittens relax when their mother carries them by the scruff.) Once you have the scruff you can sequester the cat more securely by grasping the hind legs with your other hand, wrapping your fingers around the hock joint and supporting the rear end. Do not hold the legs if injured. A cat can be held by the scruff in the air until it is placed, rear first, in a carrier or container (pillowcase, box, net, etc.). It can also safely be held in this manner until wrapped in a towel. (Improvise by using a jacket, pillowcase, feedbag or whatever is available)
- Gloves are often mentioned for handling fractious cats; however, cats are able to bite through thick gloves. The thickness of the gloves often prevents secure restraint.
- Carry a non-fearful cat by cradling it in your arm against your side. Always support the hind end. If there is an injury – keep the injury toward your body.
- Muzzling a cat is more difficult than muzzling a long-nosed dog. Muzzling a cat is shown on page 27 of the Cat First Aid book. Nylon muzzles with Velcro closures are the easiest to maneuver. If using a long strip of fabric, follow the directions on page 30 of the Dog First Aid book. Remember the last step: pass under the nose restraint and bring the strip up between the eyes and over to the back before tying. Never muzzle if the cat is having breathing difficulty or vomiting.
- A muzzle can also be made from a plastic cup with a shoelace or gauze run through a hole on either side to hold in place. Don't forget to cut a hole in the bottom to allow for breathing.

NAPPS NOTE: Sitters should have in their first aid kit a nylon muzzle for cats or a short-nosed dog (pug muzzle) with Velcro connectors. This is quickly and easily positioned on a cat's head. It not only works to prevent bites; it acts as a blinder and will actually calm the cat. The Velcro closure also permits easy removal. The muzzle is beneficial to restrain an injured cat and can be used effectively during

hydration or medicating an area not involving the nose or mouth. Remember to disinfect the muzzle after each use.

6. ABC's AND RESCUE BREATHING

AIRWAY

BREATHING

CIRCULATION

The ABC's are the format for all emergency care. Check the airway to make sure it is clear. Listen and feel for breathing. Check the pulse for circulation.

What is normal to the cat as compared to what you might be finding in an emergency situation?

NAPPS NOTE: As a professional pet sitter you should look at the ABC's as the basis and beginning point for any accident or injury. Learn these three steps efficiently and effectively.

- If a pulse is present but the cat is not breathing – immediately begin rescue breathing. Lay the cat on its side, tilt the head back, open the mouth, pull the tongue forward, check and clear the airway.
- If it is still not breathing – remove the collar and proceed by cupping your hands over the nose and mouth and giving 5 short puff rescue breaths. Watch for the chest to rise and fall to make sure air is entering the lungs.
- Check pulse and breathing. Examine the airway by lifting the cat's head back to accommodate more air. Continue giving rescue breaths at the rate of 20-30 per minute checking for breathing and pulse every 2-3 minutes. After 20 minutes there is little chance of revival.
- Note: Some doctors recommend only covering the cat's nose and not the cat's mouth to prevent over inflation of the lungs.

7. CARDIOPULMONARY RESUSCITATION – CPR

After you have performed rescue breathing; if there is still no pulse begin CPR. NEVER BEGIN COMPRESSIONS IF THERE IS A PULSE.

Place the cat on its right side, facing you. Place one hand underneath and one on top of the cat's ribs (5th rib area where the elbow meets the chest wall). Compress 1/2 inch. Do five compressions to each rescue breath. Take care not to over inflate the lungs. Repeat while regularly stopping to check for a pulse. Perform cycles of

rescue breaths and chest compressions until the cat has a strong heartbeat and you reach a veterinary hospital or until 20 minutes have elapsed and your efforts have not been successful.

NAPPS NOTE: It is vital that each professional pet sitter know how to follow the ABC's, rescue breathing and CPR. Often the cat may be brought around with just rescue breathing and compressions may never be necessary. REMEMBER – NEVER USE CPR IF THERE IS A PULSE.

If the cat is not breathing on its own after 20 minutes of rescue breathing and compressions it probably will not recover. It should also be noted that most animals (as humans) who have had CPR do not survive. Do not feel as though you are a failure if you have not been able to save an animal.

8. CHOKING

- Take care in removing objects from a cat's mouth. Never attempt to pull something out if it is partially swallowed – ex. thread, yarn, string or needle.
- Veterinary care should be sought immediately.
- Use a modified Heimlich maneuver to dislodge an obstruction. Kneel and hold the cat by the scruff, with the cat's back toward you. Place the other hand below the rib cage and give 5 inward and upward short thrusts.
- If the object is not dislodged, suspend the cat by the hips with the head hanging down. Check the mouth. If the airway is still blocked, give 5 back blows with the flat of your hand in the cat's shoulder area. Check the airway and repeat 5 rescue breaths and 5 abdominal thrusts.
- If the object is not dislodged or the cat becomes unconscious, follow the ABC's and begin CPR.

NAPPS NOTE: As a pet sitter – pet proof the areas in which the cat has access. Remove all strings, yarn, and sewing materials. Check for rubber bands, cellophane, tin foil, twist ties and plastic bags. It is much easier to pet proof a house than deal with an emergency situation. Leave a note for the client as to why you may have put something out of reach. Many times, a client needs to be educated about some of the hazards you may find. Do not hesitate as it may later save a life.

9. SHOCK

- SHOCK IS LIFE THREATENING IN AS LITTLE AS 10 MINUTES.

Cardiopulmonary arrest may soon follow. Prepare to perform CPR.

- Trauma causes insufficient oxygen in the blood supply. Lack of oxygen shuts down the body and causes shock.
- **Shock symptoms:** Pale gums, weak pulse and hypothermia.
- Stop any blood loss and keep the cat warm and quiet.
- Elevate the hind end (if no head trauma) to allow blood to flow freely to the brain.
- Rub the tips of the ears gently in a circular motion – an acupressure point which may prevent early shock from progressing to severe shock.
- Honey or (Karo®) corn syrup may be rubbed on the gums to keep the cat conscious and blood sugar levels from dropping.

10. ABRASIONS, CUTS AND TEARS AND PAD WOUNDS

- It is recommended to wear non-latex gloves when treating any wounds.
- Abrasions are the scrapes to the skin's top layer, that when well cleaned, are easily healed. Wash the wound with water or saline solution, clip hair away if necessary. Be sure any foreign matter is removed. Cover only if the injury is in an area that will collect more debris. Check for infection until healed.
- Apply direct pressure over all bleeding wounds. Apply a pad and then additional pads on top of the first as needed. NEVER remove a blood saturated pad as it will disturb the clotting process and bleeding may resume.
- Foot pad injuries can be serious and are prone to infection if not kept clean.
- Many blood vessels in the pads provide for heavy bleeding.
- Wash well with warm, soapy water or saline solution. Look for any foreign objects (glass, thorn, etc.) in the wound. Remove if able.
- Apply direct pressure to stop the bleeding.
- Dry the foot and apply an antibiotic only if it is a minor wound that does need to be seen by a veterinarian. Cover to prevent contamination.
- Procedure for bandaging a paw is on page 90 of the Dog First Aid book (not in the cat book). The bandage must be properly applied, or it will be easily removed by the cat and infection could result.
- Nails clipped too short may cause bleeding. Bleeding may be stopped with a styptic powder, flour, cornstarch or soap.

11. EYE INJURIES

Foreign Object

- Examine the eye when symptoms appear.
- Hold open and flush with a saline solution or water.
- If an object is imbedded – DO NOT attempt to remove.
- Cover both eyes with a moist cloth and transport to the veterinarian.
- Corneal abrasions can result in blindness.
- Do not administer any ointments without a veterinary consult. Administering
 - the incorrect ointment can cause blindness.
- An Elizabethan collar may prevent a cat from doing further damage to the eye through pawing.

Eye Out of Socket (proptosis)

- The eye is bulging from the socket due to head or neck trauma.
- Keep the eye wet with a sterile eye wash or artificial tears.
- Transport to the vet. The eye may be resocketed, but vision is usually lost.

Corneal Ulcers

The ulcer is usually derived as a scratch from another animal or a foreign object. Prevent the cat from rubbing the eye by covering both eyes. As both eyes work in tandem this usually prevents eye movement, thus less pain or injury.

Take the cat immediately to the veterinarian for an examination and medication to prevent infection and possible eye loss.

NAPPS NOTE: It is best to allow a veterinarian to remove any foreign body that cannot be flushed out with saline solution or water. Injury to the eye can easily occur if there is any movement from a restrained cat.

Be certain that any ophthalmic ointment dispensed is designated for a particular cat injury. Some are triple antibiotic while others contain steroids too. Using one at random may cause injury or blindness. If any question, call the veterinarian for verification.

12. FRACTURES

- Splint a limb fracture only if it does not cause undue stress or movement from the injured cat.
- Support above and below any fracture without straightening or moving the position of the limb. Splinting improperly can cause more injury than not splinting at all.
- Only splint fractures that are below the elbow or knee.

- Cover any compound fracture but do not wrap or splint tightly.
- Some possible materials for splinting may include tongue depressor, magazine or rolled up newspaper, washcloth or small towel, stick, chop stick, tree branch, pen, pencil or anything small and rigid to support a cat's limb.
- Transport to the veterinarian for evaluation.
- A board should always be used to support the entire cat if it appears there are fractures other than a limb.
- Cats will often walk on a fracture, so it is best to have any limping checked by a veterinarian.

NAPPS NOTE: It would be wise to muzzle a cat before trying to treat for a fracture or any of the wounds discussed previously. The blinding effect is calming to the cat and the bite prevention is well worth the effort.

13. CAR ACCIDENTS

Most humane organizations recommend keeping cats indoors.

SCENE SAFETY FIRST

Check the cat for consciousness.

Follow the ABC's and prepare to treat for shock.

If the cat has been injured by a car there may be internal as well as external injuries. Always transport on a board or something rigid (cardboard, basket, garbage can lid – improvise).

Call ahead to the vet clinic so they may prepare for the emergency.

Evisceration is a severe injury where the organs have become exposed. This is life threatening. Cover the organs (especially those connected but outside the body) and keep WET with water or saline solution. Check the ABC's and treat for shock. Transport immediately to the veterinarian.

NAPPS NOTE: This severe injury is often seen from the impact of a car or mutilation from the radiator fan in an auto. Outdoor cats often climb up near a motor to warm themselves and when the car is turned on they can become injured. Before starting a car on a cold winter day; bang on the hood to frighten away any hidden feline.

Tape does not stick well to wood. Tape wrapped around the board and the cat and stuck to itself, will hold more securely. Have a scissors available to cut the tape. Long strips of sheeting are often more easily applied and removed.

14. ANIMAL BITES AND ABSCESES

- Puncture wounds may look minor from the outside but can become abscessed or infected very quickly. Puncture wounds tend to heal more quickly on the exterior leaving bacteria to fester within.
- Swelling and pain may help detect the location of a wound. Fever above 103 degrees may accompany.
- ALL ABSCESES NEED TO BE OPEN OR OPENED, DRAINED AND CLEANED FOR PROPER HEALING.
- Clip hair from around the area. Squeeze any pus out and flush with a saline solution. Take the cat in for a veterinary evaluation. Antibiotics may be prescribed to prevent further infection.
- Lesser wounds may be treated by washing well and flushing with peroxide numerous times during the day.
- Warm compresses may be used to decrease pain and draw out an infection. Never use a warm compress if bleeding is present (it increases bleeding).
- Increased swelling indicates probable closure of the wound and abscess.
- Transport to the veterinarian.

NAPPS NOTE: *Dogs tend to be bitten by dogs and cats bitten by other cats over territory boundaries. Neutering cats can reduce these behaviors. Cats may be bitten by dogs that consider them prey. Cat bites puncture like a needle while dog bites tend to tear muscle and tissue. Infection is caused by trapped bacteria multiplying. In cat bite wounds, the skin surface may heal rapidly, and infection begins. An abscess may appear in as little as one hour. **TAKE ALL ANIMAL BITES SERIOUSLY AND HAVE TREATED BY A VETERINARIAN. CHECK THE RABIES INNOCULATION STATUS OF THOSE ANIMALS INVOLVED IN THE BITE.***

NAPPS NOTE 2: *When you are pet sitting for a multi-cat or multi-pet household, playing or fighting could occur while no one is in the house. It is advisable to check pets every day for possible injury. This is especially advised if you see clumps of fur in the house.*

A cat bites one in every 170 people in the U.S. each year. Great care should be taken when dealing with a cat to human bite. A puncture wound can seal quickly as the tooth is withdrawn. Statistics show that 80% of all cat bites become infected. Bleeding of the wound is actually good because it may flush out infectious bacteria. Cats possess pasterella and staph bacteria in their mouths. These bacteria can cause a nasty infection in as little as 12 hours requiring IV and oral antibiotics. Always treat a cat bite seriously. Immediately clean with antibacterial soap and hot water. Squeeze to encourage bleeding. Apply a Betadine solution to sterilize. Watch for any redness, heat or swelling. It is recommended that you seek professional medical treatment for any cat bite. People have lost fingers and hands due to pasterella bacteria.

15. BURNS

Visible signs may not always appear immediately. It depends upon the degree of the burn

NAPPS NOTE: Learn the different degrees of burns and treat accordingly. Contact a veterinarian and convey the severity of the burn, as well as the cause. Follow the ABC's. Treat for shock. It is recommended to wear non-latex gloves when treating any wounds.

- 1st degree burns – hair singed, skin red or discolored
- 2nd degree burn – hair burned off – skin blistered • 3rd degree burn – hair burned off and skin charred or white
- Follow the ABC's and treat for shock.
- Flush with cool water 5-10 minutes and apply a soft, cool wet cloth. Do not attempt to rub or clean.

- Do not apply any ointment or home remedy.
- Do not puncture blisters or peel off burned skin.
- Apply a cold compress, cover, and transport to the veterinarian.
- Do not immerse cat in water, as it may cause the body temperature to drop quickly and shock will result.
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NAPPS NOTE: Because cats are curious and like to jump, make yourself aware of any hazards in the home for which you are sitting. Take precautions to prevent a cat from jumping on a hot radiator or a wood stove. Make sure the client turned off the kitchen stove and iron before leaving. All of these could cause a heat burn emergency.

Older cats seek warmth and may unknowingly be burned because of their decreased sensitivities. Foot pad burns are very painful and difficult to heal.

16. ELECTRICAL SHOCK AND BURNS

- SCENE SAFETY IS MOST IMPORTANT WHEN DEALING WITH ELECTRICITY.
- Use a wooden or plastic pole (mop or broom) not metal, to remove any hot wires NEAR AN INJURED PET.
- TURN OFF THE POWER before attempting to rescue a cat near an electrical wire.
- Electrical shock is not always fatal; however, it may cause burns.
- Burns of the mouth may show as blisters on the lips, gums and tongue.
- Check for the ABC's and follow with rescue breathing and CPR as needed.
- Watch for shock and proceed with veterinarian follow-up.

*NAPPS NOTE: Electrical shocks can stop the heart, cause paralysis or even death. Often the symptoms may be delayed a few hours. An irregular heartbeat or breathing difficulties may appear. The cat may have a loss of appetite and remain lethargic **TAKE ALL ELECTRICAL SHOCKS SERIOUSLY**. Even minor electrical shocks can damage the blood vessels of the lungs causing fluid buildup. Veterinary follow-up is a must.*

17. HEAT EXHAUSTION AND HEAT STROKE

SYMPTOMS OF HEAT EXHAUSTION INCLUDE: rapid breathing, panting, mouth foaming, diarrhea or loss of consciousness.

- Move the overheated cat to a cool area and cool with a fan. Do not immerse the cat in water as shock may occur from body temperature lowering too quickly.
- NEVER leave a cat in a car during the warm months as heatstroke is possible. Cats with a short nose (brachycephalic syndrome) such as Persians and Himalayans are very susceptible to heat exhaustion and heat stroke.
- Check temperature with a rectal thermometer. Bring body temperature down slowly to avoid shock and possible organ shutdown. **Stop the cooling at 103 degrees as the body will continue to cool.**

SYMPTOMS OF HEAT STROKE INCLUDE: Frantic breathing, bright red tongue, thick, sticky saliva, bloody nose, bloody vomiting, bloody diarrhea, bluish lips, and temperature 104 degrees or above.

- If the cat has collapsed or is unconscious, wrap the cat in cold wet towels and apply cold compresses immediately to the head and neck area.
- Cool compresses may also be placed in the head, underarm and abdomen.
- Offer cool water to drink if conscious and not vomiting.
- Follow the ABC's and prepare for shock (do not cover to keep warm unless the body temperature has dropped below 103 degrees). Administer rescue breathing or CPR as required.
- Transport to the veterinarian immediately as this is a life-threatening situation.

NAPPS NOTE: Be absolutely certain that cats in your care have adequate shelter during adverse weather. Cats, like dogs, do not have very efficient cooling systems. Cats do not sweat. They fluff their fur to aid air circulation near the skin. Cats also lick themselves so that evaporation dissipates the heat. While thick fur can insulate against heat, matted fur can actually prevent air circulation and cooling. Take action immediately; a body temperature of 106+ degrees can be deadly. Shock can develop, and organ failure of the kidneys, liver, lungs, heart and brain are eminent. Blood clotting can also cease.

COOL THEN TRANSPORT.

ADMINISTER EMERGENCY FIRST AID AND RUSH SAFELY TO THE VETERINARIAN.

18. HYPOTHERMIA AND FROSTBITE

The cold of wind, water and snow can lower the body temperature of a cat to a temperature below 95 degrees – thus hypothermia.

Symptoms include shivering, decreased heart rate, confusion, pale gums, collapse and coma.

Move to a warm area, dry immediately with a towel and apply warm water bottles or hot packs to raise body temperature. Wrap in a blanket or dry towel. Do not use a heating pad. Check temperature every 10 minutes.

- Severe hypothermia is when the body temperature reaches 90 degrees. At this point the cat should be warmed by the veterinarian from the inside out. Do not apply external heat. Apply corn syrup (Karo®) or honey to the gums to elevate blood sugar.
- A cat's general age, health, and build may make a cat more susceptible to hypothermia.

FROSTBITE: Damage appears on the ears, tail, toes and scrotum because blood and heat are diverted to the torso.

Frostbite may be hard to detect because of the cat's fur.

DO NOT rub the areas of possible frostbite as the skin may slough off. Areas affected should be warmed for 20 minutes with WARM water on a cloth pressed to the affected area if immersion isn't possible.

Veterinary follow-up is a must.

NAPPS NOTE: Frostbite occurs as cells freeze and expand much like water freezing and overflowing in an ice cube tray. The skin damage is usually permanent. The skin might be hard and inflexible, red, white or blistered. Ears may also flop. After initial first aid, antibiotics are often prescribed to prevent infection. Be absolutely certain that cats in your care have adequate shelter during adverse weather. Some veterinarians advise that cats should not be allowed outdoors when the temperature falls below 25 degrees. Cats have a good shiver reflex to generate body heat which the fur traps. However, if they are wet and/or matted, they are unable to stay warm.

19. POISONING

Symptoms of poisoning may be due to a vast number of toxic substances. You can save a pet's life with first aid either by getting rid of the poison, neutralizing it, or diluting it.

Symptoms include: Bleeding from body cavities, seizures, swollen eyes or mouth, vomiting or diarrhea, drooling or shock.

- Be a detective and try to locate the possible toxic substance. Transport the cat and any containers suspected of holding the ingested poison. • Follow the ABC's
- Never give anything by mouth if vomiting, seizing or unconscious. Check with the ASPCA Poison Control Center or veterinarian before inducing vomiting.
- Provide the following to the Poison Control Center: the poisoning substance if known, the time elapsed since exposure, the breed, age, sex and weight of the cat, and any visible symptoms. Include pulse, respiration and CRT.
- **Do not induce vomiting unless the poison is absolutely known and recommended by the Poison Control Hotline or your veterinarian.**
- If internal poisoning - before inducing vomiting – make sure the cat has some food in the stomach (try something they crave)
- Give 1 teaspoon of 3% hydrogen peroxide for every 10 pounds – repeat dosage in 15-20 minutes for a total of 2 doses.
- **NEVER** use syrup of Ipecac® for cats.
- For topical poisons that are oil based (ex. flea control) use a dishwashing liquid such as Dawn to bathe immediately. Rinse thoroughly.
- For powders – it is extremely important to brush out and then bathe so the cat does not ingest through grooming.
- For second hand poisoning (cat who ate the mouse who ate the poison) – transport immediately to the veterinarian as this is life threatening. Most of these poisons contain anticoagulants and the cat will bleed internally.
- Antifreeze (ethylene glycol) is sweet tasting and toxic. As little as 1 tsp can kill a cat. Immediate vet care is needed.
- For paint or tar – dissolve with mineral oil or vegetable oil. Then dust with cornstarch or flour and bathe with a dishwashing detergent.

NAPPS NOTE: AS A PROFESSIONAL PET SITTER YOU SHOULD MEMORIZE THE NUMBER OF THE ASPCA ANIMAL POISON CONTROL CENTER

1-800-548-2423 or 1-888-426-4435. There is a \$50 fee for this service, billed to your credit card. Should you not have a credit card available, a call from a land line to 1-900-443-0000 will have the service billed directly to the phone used for the call.

NEVER PUT DOG FLEA OR TICK CONTROL ON A CAT. Almost all are toxic. Read the labels – some flea products should not be used on kittens or longhaired cats. Cats are very sensitive to medications and poisons. They are not able to metabolize many chemicals.

Never use cleaning products with phenols around cats (Lysol® Pine Sol® etc.) Read the labels.

20. URINARY BLOCKAGE

Urinary tract problems are common in cats of all ages and breeds.

Symptoms include; crying, straining in the litter box, bloody urine, dribbling urine, pain, loss of appetite, vomiting, not grooming, urinating places other than litter box.

Distress from the inability to urinate and the buildup of toxins or stones within can lead to an **emergency** situation. **Transport to the vet immediately. Lift and carry in a manner in which there is no pressure on the bladder.**

Blockage is when the poisons normally excreted in the urine accumulate in the cat's system causing severe illness, organ damage, coma and death.

Blockage is most common in male cats.

Do not try to self-diagnose by putting pressure on the bladder as feline bladders are fragile and rupture easily.

If a mucus plug is visible on the outside of the penis, remove with a soft, warm wet cloth. Massaging the area around the penis may loosen any minor debris and allow urine to pass.

More than half of the cats that have urinary tract problems will have them reoccur. Special diet and increased water intake may aid this problem.

NAPPS NOTE: Because urinary tract irritations, infections, and blockages are common and recurrent, always inquire about previous urinary problems of cats in your care. During pet sitting, keep close watch on the urine (and feces) in the litter box. Check and document daily.

CONSIDER ALL URINARY TRACT ILLNESS AS AN EMERGENCY. If a urinary tract blockage is left untreated, death is imminent.

21. ANAL SACS

Anal sac glands are located at 5 and 7 o'clock in the anal sphincter. Secretions are a brownish and foul-smelling liquid which is normally emptied with the cat's regular defecation. Cats may also "dump the sacs" when highly excited or afraid. Symptoms of irritated, infected or impacted sacs include swelling, constant licking or scooting on hind quarters.

Take the cat to the veterinarian to check for infection and/or parasites.

At that time, ask to be shown how to express the glands correctly if needed.

22. ASTHMA

Asthma is quite common in cats, rarely seen in dogs.

Symptoms include coughing, panting, open mouthed breathing, wheezing and blue colored gums.

Move the cat to a cool place (cool temps reduce oxygen needs)

Move to a quiet place with fresh air- or air-conditioned air as feline asthma is thought to stem from allergies.

Transport in a carrier (as opposed to holding) to the veterinarian.

Follow the ABC's and administer rescue breaths as needed.

Feline asthma may be helped by not smoking, using non-scented and dust free litter, humidify the air in the winter months, vacuuming regularly and using an air purifier. Aerosol deodorants, room fresheners or paints may trigger an attack.

Medications prescribed by a veterinarian may keep feline asthma under control.

Siamese are most susceptible.

NAPPS NOTE: Asthma in the initial stages might be mistaken for coughing, as in hairball evacuation. The continual wheezing, with the cat seemingly unable to gain a breath, might indicate feline asthma. With your help, a vet consult might determine an allergic, genetic or nervous reaction as the cause.

23. BLOOD SUGAR EMERGENCIES

Hypoglycemia – blood sugar low

Hyperglycemia – blood sugar high (diabetes)

Blood sugar emergencies are most often caused by diabetes.

Symptoms: Weight loss, weakness, disorientation, wobbly, glassy-eyed, shaking, unconscious.

Most diabetes in cats can be controlled with a specific diet and 1-2 insulin injections daily.

Hypoglycemia may be caused by an overdose of insulin or by not eating a meal at injection time.

Corn syrup (Karo®), glucose paste, or sugar water may be rubbed on the gums to bring the blood sugar level up. This may be used even if the cat is unconscious.

Follow the ABC's. Vet care should be sought immediately.

NAPPS NOTE: Regulating feline insulin levels can be tricky. As in humans, weight loss can decrease insulin needs. Cats are noted for showing positive for diabetes for a period of time and then not at a later date. Testing the urine is an accurate means to detect insulin requirements. Work with the client's veterinarian to prevent any mishaps.

24. BONE, MUSCLE AND JOINT INJURIES

A sprain is an injury involving a ligament.

A strain is an injury involving a muscle.

Treatment requires alternating cool and warm compresses four times daily for 15 minutes.

Restrict exercise and seek veterinary care if no improvement is seen.

Never give any pain relievers to a cat unless prescribed by a veterinarian.

NAPPS NOTE: Do not give unprescribed medication to a cat in pain. They do not metabolize many medications. One Tylenol® can kill a cat.

25. CHEMICAL BURNS

SCENE SAFETY is foremost to prevent self-injury during the rescue.

Muzzle the cat immediately as most animals instinctively lick their wounds.

Locate and identify the burning agent. If caustic, wear gloves.

Do not treat the burn without knowing exactly what reacts with the hazard chemical. Even water may accelerate a burn.

If it is a powder, cover the cat's nose (yours too) and try to brush the powder out of the hair.

If you know the poisoning agent and because the chemical formulations of products change often, it is best to call the ASPCA Poison Control Center first. They have the most up-to-date information readily available. Follow their instructions and then contact your local veterinarian.

26. CONSTIPATION

Symptoms include: straining or crying, small amounts of hard stool, or no stool for more than one day.

- Check the rectal area to see if any mats of hair may be preventing proper elimination.
- Severe constipation may cause appetite loss, vomiting, and painful abdomens.
- Older pets are more prone.
- If the cat is still passing a stool, but hard; add any of the following to their food: pumpkin (1-2 tsp.) bran (1/2 tsp.) or unflavored Metamucil®, Benifiber® or any psyllium product (½ teaspoon daily).
- Encourage water drinking by adding a little chicken broth.
- If no stool is passing, an enema may be required. Consult the veterinarian for the proper kind. Never use human enemas for cats.
- A stool softener may be helpful for a persistent problem.

NAPPS NOTE: During pet sitting, keep close watch on the feces (and urine) in the litter box. Check daily. If there are no feces (and you can't locate elsewhere in the house) watch the cat closely to determine if a vet visit is necessary.

27. DENTAL DISEASE

Keeping teeth clean and free from dental disease may provide better health for your cat.

Mouth infections can travel through the bloodstream and cause organ damage, usually to the kidneys and heart.

Brush your cat's teeth regularly and have them checked annually by your veterinarian.

NAPPS NOTE: Brushing a client's cat's teeth might seem frightening. Have the parent demonstrate. Watch how the parent holds the cat, talks to the cat, and

proceeds. Keeping with the same routine will prevent undue stress to you as caretaker and the cat.

28. DIARRHEA

Diarrhea may be caused by a change in diet, parasites, thyroid disease, toxins, chronic inflammatory disease, etc. Check the cat for dehydration. Withhold food for 24 hours. Only if vomiting occurs with the diarrhea – withhold water. If the diarrhea persists longer than 24 hours or has blood within, a vet consult should be obtained.

Kaolin (clay) may be used. **Kaopectate®**, once safe, has been reformulated and should **NEVER** be given to a cat. Pectin may also be given. Both the pectin and kaolin should be administered at ½ to 1ml (1cc) per pound of body weight.

NAPPS NOTE: Always be concerned about diarrhea as cats may dehydrate very quickly – especially the very young and the elderly. Monitor the litter box daily to evaluate the urine and feces passage.

As a professional pet sitter, you might want to learn how to proceed with the administering of sub-cutaneous fluids. There are many clients needing this service for their elderly or kidney impaired cats.

29. DROWNING

Most cats shy away from water, but an occasional cat may jump into a bath tub, hot tub or pool and be unable to climb out. Cats have also fallen head first into toilets and drowned.

When a cat is found unconscious in water, remove the cat from the water. Raise the hind end and slap the chest or shoulders to help the water drain from the lungs. Follow the ABC's and prepare to treat for shock. Dry and keep warm while transporting to the veterinarian.

NAPPS NOTE: At home and at the client's house – keep all toilet seat lids closed. Make sure pools or hot tubs are protected with a cover or the cat has no access to the area.

30. FALLS

Cats may fall, jump or be thrown from high windows or balconies. Their injuries are referred to as high-rise syndrome.

Cats have the ability to “right” themselves when falling so they land on their feet. That does not mean that there are no injuries.

Injuries might include broken teeth or jaws, spinal damage, leg fractures, bladder ruptures as well as other internal wounding.

Restrain the cat. Follow the ABC’s. Control any bleeding. Treat for shock.

Confine in a carrier and transport to the veterinarian.

NAPPS NOTE: Pet sitters should ensure that cats do not have access to locations where they can fall. Be sure all doors and windows (screens) leading outside are closed and securely locked.

31. PARASITIC DISEASE

- **Fleas** –only use flea products for cats on cats. **NEVER** use dog products on cats as they can cause neurological damage or death. Use flea prevention if your cats are outside and exposed. If there is a flea infestation in the house – remember to treat the animal and the house (carpet, pet bedding, etc.) at the same time or the fleas will continue to flourish.
- **Mange mites** –of the four skin mites listed – only the scabies mite is transmitted to humans. Ear mites can cause severe itching, pain and damage to the eardrum if left untreated.
- **Tapeworms** –are obtained from the flea larvae. You may see small, white, flat segments around the anus. If dried they resemble rice. Keep your cat flea free to avoid tapeworms.
- **Ticks** –blood sucking parasites which may carry such diseases as Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Tick Paralysis, Lyme disease, etc. Keep your cat tick free by keeping indoors or treating with a topical or internal preventative. Remove ticks by spraying with a tick spray or coating with mineral oil or petroleum jelly until the tick backs out or smothers.

32.PENETRATING OBJECTS

Do not remove anything that has penetrated into the torso of the cat. Secure the object from any movement by taping firmly and immobilizing cat until treated by a veterinarian.

33. PENETRATING CHEST WOUND

If air is seeping through a chest wound the wound must be sealed. A pad with antibiotic ointment (K-Y jelly® or Vaseline® in an emergency) may be placed tightly against the wound and held firmly in place. Plastic wrap or a plastic bag may be secured around the chest to help seal the wound. Prepare to treat for shock and follow the ABC's. Transport immediately to the veterinarian.

34. SKUNK ENCOUNTER

The blast from the skunk is derived from the skunk's anal sacs and is oily and smelly.

Be sure to flush the cat's eyes well with a saline solution or artificial tears as they may be burned from the encounter.

The book recommends using a soap/degreaser (Dawn®) or tomato juice to remove the smell.

NAPPS NOTE: Cornell University did a recent study on this subject. They tested many products - the degreasing soaps, peroxide, tomato juice, etc. The best skunk smell removal was determined to be bar Ivory® soap. The liquid was not effective.

35. SPIDER AND INSECT BITES

Because of the cat's curious nature, it is often bitten or stung on the nose, mouth, or paw. The two most poisonous spiders in the US are the black widow and the brown recluse.

- Black widow (black with red hourglass on belly). Bites can cause pain, vomiting, and labored breathing.
- Brown recluse (brown with fiddle on back). Bites can cause pain, chills, vomiting, and an open sore with severe tissue damage.
- Stings from wasps or bees will cause swelling, restlessness, panting, vomiting, difficulty breathing and collapse. There is the possibility of life-threatening anaphylactic shock in which the face and neck swells which causes breathing difficulties. If you know the cat is sensitive to stings, keeping chlorpheniramine (Chlor Trimetron®) on hand may be wise. Administer 1 mg. per pound every 8 hours.
- Epinephrine may also be prescribed by a vet.
- Follow the ABC's and rescue breathing.

- Keep the bite or sting below heart level to slow the spread of venom.
- Remove the stinger by scraping with a rigid object such as finger nail, knife blade or credit card. Do not use tweezers as it will squeeze more venom into the cat.
- Wash the wound with soap and water.
- Apply a cold compress to ease pain and slow circulation of venom. Watch for infection.
- If you have actually seen a poisonous spider bite, transfer the cat to the veterinarian immediately.

NAPPS NOTE: Signs of distress may appear immediately or 30 minutes after the bite, but some venomous bites may not cause complications until 6 hours later. Some symptoms from spiders, ants, and scorpions may not appear until 3 or 4 days after the bite or sting. Professional pet sitters should have daily hands-on encounters with the cats in their care. Often swelling or an abscess may be felt even when it is not visible through the fur.