

# Pet First Aid

## PVMA FACT SHEET

Pets may require first aid for a number of reasons: injury, illness, seizure, or an accident. You should see your veterinarian for treatment, but what happens in the meantime? Pet first aid is care you administer yourself immediately, but it cannot take the place of proper veterinary care. Brushing up on what to do in an emergency can make first aid less stressful and can even save your pet's life until veterinary care is received.

### Basic First Aid Treatment

#### Seizures

- Keep your pet away from any objects (including furniture) that might hurt it. Do not try to restrain the pet.
- Time the seizure (they usually last 2-3 minutes).
- After the seizure has stopped, keep your pet as warm and quiet as possible and contact your veterinarian.

#### Fractures

- Muzzle your pet and gently lay them on a flat surface for support.
- While transporting your injured pet to a veterinarian, use a stretcher (you can use a board or other firm surface as a stretcher, or use a throw rug or blanket as a sling). If possible, secure the pet to the stretcher (make sure you don't put pressure on the injured area or the animal's chest) for transport—this may be as simple as wrapping a blanket around them.
- You can attempt to set the fracture with a homemade splint, but remember that a badly-placed splint may cause more harm than good. If in doubt, it is always best to leave the bandaging and splinting to a veterinarian.

#### Bleeding (external)

- Muzzle your pet.
- Press a clean, thick gauze pad over the wound, and keep pressure over the wound with your hand until the blood starts clotting. This will often take several minutes for the clot to be strong enough to stop the bleeding. Hold pressure on it for a minimum of 3 minutes and then check it.
- If bleeding is severe and on the legs, apply a tourniquet (using an elastic band or gauze) between the wound and the body, and apply a bandage and pressure over the wound. Loosen the tourniquet for 20 seconds every 15-20 minutes. Severe bleeding can quickly be life-threatening—get your animal to a veterinarian immediately.

#### Chemical Burns

- Muzzle the animal.
- For chemical burns, flush burn immediately with water.
- For severe burns, quickly apply ice water compress to burned area.

#### Choking

Symptoms: difficulty breathing, excessive pawing at the mouth, choking sounds when breathing or coughing, blue-tinged lips/tongue.

- Use caution – a choking pet is more likely to bite in panic.
- If the pet can still breathe, keep it calm and get it to a veterinarian.
- Look into the pet's mouth to see if a foreign object is visible. If you see an object, gently try to remove it with pliers or tweezers, but be careful not to



push the object further down the throat. Don't spend a lot of time trying to remove it if it's not easy to reach—don't delay, and get your pet to a veterinarian immediately.

- If you can't remove the object or your pet collapses, place both hands on the side of your pet's rib cage and apply firm quick pressure, or lay your pet on its side and strike the rib cage firmly with the palm of your hand 3-4 times. The idea is to sharply push air out of their lungs and push the object out from behind. Keep repeating this until the object is dislodged or until you arrive at the veterinarian's office.

#### Heatstroke

Never leave your pet in the car on warm days. The temperature inside a car can rise very quickly to dangerous levels, even on milder days. Pets can succumb to heatstroke very easily and must be treated very quickly to give them the best chance of survival.

- If you cannot immediately get your pet to a veterinarian, move it to a shaded area and out of direct sunlight.
- Place a cool or cold, wet towel around its neck and head (do not cover your pet's eyes, nose or mouth).
- Remove the towel, wring it out, and rewet it and rewrap it every few minutes as you cool the animal.
- Pour or use a hose to keep water running over the animal's body (especially the abdomen and between the hind legs), and use your hands to massage its legs and sweep the water away as it absorbs the body heat.
- Transport the pet to a veterinarian as soon as possible.

#### Shock

Symptoms: weak pulse, shallow breathing, nervousness, dazed eyes. Usually follows severe injury or extreme fright.

- Keep animal restrained, warm and quiet.
- If animal is unconscious, keep head level with rest of body.
- Transport the pet immediately to a veterinarian.

