

First aid for your dog and cat / Pedigree Petfoods.

Contributors

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Transporting your cat to the veterinary surgeon

It is not always possible for a vet to come to see your cat; in fact, it is often better to take him to the surgery, where there is specialised equipment to deal with emergencies.

If there is any possibility that your cat may have to be given an anaesthetic, for example to open an abscess or take an X-ray, do not give him anything to eat or drink.

A container is essential to transport a cat in a car. If a proper cat basket is not available, a stout cardboard box such as those used to contain twelve wine or spirit bottles makes a good substitute. Cut or punch some small holes for ventilation, and tie the box firmly with string or adhesive tape.

Do not make the common error of half-filling the box with a cushion, if this will leave inadequate room for your cat. A few layers of newspaper or an old woollen garment are ideal.

Pick up an injured cat by supporting him firmly from underneath and steadying his head.

If a cat is very vicious, the best method is to drop an old thick coat or blanket over him. Tuck the edges towards and under the cat and pick up the whole bundle and put it in the box taking care not to suffocate the patient.

Telephone the surgery to say that you are on your way with an emergency.



Talking Pets is a new information service for pet owners and animal lovers which has been produced in association with Pedigree Petfoods Education Centre.

Your best source of advice and information on the care and health of pets is your veterinary surgeon. Make a note of his name and number here

Name

Address

Phone

If you need further information about feeding your pet, please write to:
PEDIGREE PETFOODS
EDUCATION CENTRE,
PO. BOX 77,
FREEPOST,
BURTON-ON-TRENT,
DE11 7BR.

Illustrated brochures giving details of school resource material and free loan film or video cassette service are also available from this address.



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Talking PETS

First aid for your dog and cat

Keep this leaflet in a safe place

This guide will help you to give first aid to your dog or cat in an emergency. Before an emergency arises, it is important that you find out how to contact your veterinary surgeon. If an emergency occurs, telephone the surgery, describe the problem and follow the instructions you are given. The notes on the following pages are to give you further help, but always follow the advice of your vet.

Your Veterinary Surgeon:

Name

Address

Telephone



One of the series of Talking Pets leaflets issued in the interests of responsible pet ownership.

First aid for your dog

Most common emergencies	Symptoms	Action
ROAD ACCIDENT	<i>You may see the accident or your dog may return obviously injured or lame.</i>	Restrain your dog if necessary to prevent further injury and get him and bystanders, away from the road. See notes on 'Transporting your dog to the veterinary surgeon' to avoid being bitten. Be careful with injured limbs. Put a cold water compress using wet cotton wool or lint on any obviously bleeding points, but above all keep the dog warm and comfortable. Contact your vet for further advice as soon as possible. Don't leave your dog lying in the road.
CUT FOOT	<i>Sudden bleeding from a foot or leg with or without lameness often occurs on beaches and when dogs swim in ponds containing broken glass. Similar symptoms may be shown by a claw broken near its base.</i>	If bleeding is profuse wrap foot in lint or cotton wool and put firm roller bandage with even pressure round the foot. Be careful not to bend a broken claw. Take the dog to a vet for whatever treatment is required. Never use an elastic band or other constricting material.
INJURED EYE	<i>One eye is suddenly very sore or is kept closed.</i>	Look for and carefully remove any obvious foreign body, such as a grass seed. This may be done by washing the eye with clean warm water and thus flushing out the foreign body. Keep the dog in semi-darkness. Take him to a vet for treatment. If this is not possible immediately, put a drop of medicinal paraffin or olive oil in the eye as an emergency measure, and prevent the dog from rubbing the affected eye with his paws or on furnishings.
ACUTE DIARRHOEA	<i>Very loose motions which may contain blood and may be accompanied by vomiting and weakness of the hind legs. This can be a very sudden emergency.</i>	Withhold all food and keep the dog warm. Bathe the mouth and gums with a warm solution of a tablespoonful of glucose or sugar in a pint of water. If the dog is weak, take to a vet quickly; if the dog is otherwise bright, take him during the next normal surgery hour. Telephone the surgery first if possible, and take careful note of any advice given.

First aid for your dog

Most common emergencies	Symptoms	Action
STINGS AND SNAKE BITES	<i>Sudden acute pain or irritation often followed by swelling. If the sting is in or near the throat, breathing may be difficult.</i>	Keep the dog cool and avoid any exercise. Bathe the swelling with cold water. Take the dog to the vet for treatment if the swelling persists for more than one hour, or as soon as possible if it is on the face or neck. Keep the tongue forward and the airway clear if breathing is difficult.
FITS	<i>Sudden uncontrolled spasmodic movements, often with clamping of the jaws and usually accompanied by salivation. The dog may fall onto his side. There may be violent twitching of the muscles across the top of the head and down the neck.</i>	Remove the collar if it is tight, and be sure that the dog cannot injure himself, for example in the fire. Make sure that he can breathe by holding the head and neck extended if necessary. Keep in a darkened, quiet room until you can get help, and prevent all sudden noises — door bells, slamming doors, etc. Most fits are over quite rapidly. Seek professional advice as soon as possible.
EARACHE	<i>The dog will scratch his ear or ears and may hold his head on one side and shake it.</i>	If there is a very sudden onset of symptoms, there may be a grass seed in the ear. Contact your vet, but do not put anything in the ear. In less acute cases, if it is necessary to wait for professional treatment, put a little warm medicinal liquid paraffin or olive oil into the ear.
POISONING	<i>There may be sudden acute sickness, prostration or violent muscular movements. Poisoning is relatively uncommon, all the signs can be produced by other conditions.</i>	There are many possible agents including slug bait. If the dog is seen to swallow a known poison, induce vomiting by pushing a solution of salt (a teaspoonful in a tumbler of water for an average-sized dog) down the throat. But give milk only if the substance swallowed is at all corrosive. Never do this more than once and not at all if the dog is unconscious. Seek your vet's advice quickly, taking with you the rest of the poisonous agent if it is known.

First aid for your dog

Most common emergencies

	Symptoms	Action
CHOKING	<i>The dog may try to vomit, or he may tear frantically at his mouth with his paws.</i>	Try to open the dog's mouth and remove the foreign body; often a piece of bone or a stick gets wedged across the roof of the mouth. In some cases a general anaesthetic may be needed so that it can safely be removed. Always get your dog checked by a vet in any case.
MISALLIANCE	<i>If your bitch is accidentally mated, it is not strictly speaking an emergency but a pregnancy can often be prevented.</i>	Your veterinary surgeon can give an injection soon after the mating which will prevent your bitch having puppies. It is best to consult the practice within 24 hours so that they can advise on the timing of the injection.
COLLAPSE	<i>The dog will lie on his stomach or side and be unable to rise. He may be breathing heavily.</i>	Obtain veterinary advice as soon as possible. In the meantime, transfer the patient onto a suitable mattress or blanket and keep warm unless the reason is obvious heatstroke. Bathe the mouth with glucose or sugar in water, but do not force the dog to swallow. Do not let the dog lie on one side for more than about 20 minutes.
HEART ATTACK	<i>Usually the owner is already aware that the dog has a heart condition. Attacks often occur in hot weather after exercise, particularly in older dogs.</i>	Lay the dog on his side with the head and neck extended. Open doors and windows to obtain as much fresh air as possible. If the tongue becomes blue, or breathing stops, massage the chest vigorously. Obtain veterinary advice as soon as possible.

Transporting your dog to the veterinary surgeon



It is not always possible for a vet to come to see your dog; in fact, it is often better to take him to the surgery, where there is specialised equipment to deal with emergencies.

If there is any possibility that your dog may have to be given an anaesthetic, for example to stitch a cut foot or to X-ray a broken leg, do not give him anything to eat or drink.

To transport an injured dog to your vet, place a blanket or an old coat on the ground above his back as he is lying. Then gently lift and pull him, body first and legs trailing, onto the blanket as shown in illustration one. In this way any broken legs or other injuries will be pulled onto the blanket in a way less likely to cause further injury.

If the dog is attempting to bite, tie his mouth gently but firmly with a bandage (a necktie, belt or dog lead will do in an emergency). Tie it firmly under his jaw and secure the loose ends behind his neck as shown in illustration two.

Should the dog be very difficult, he may be secured by putting the end of a dog lead through the handle and dropping the noose so-formed over his head. However, if the dog struggles and then collapses, release the noose immediately.

Two people can pick up the corners of the blanket to form a soft stretcher and can transfer the dog to the back seat of a car. The person walking backwards should go right through the car so the dog in the blanket can be lowered onto the back seat.

Contact your veterinary practice before leaving so that they can be prepared to deal with the emergency.



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First aid for your cat

Most common emergencies	Symptoms	Action
ROAD ACCIDENT	<i>Cats involved in accidents do not always show external signs of injury. Cat skin is very resilient and may remain unbroken despite severe internal injuries. Cats which are found dead without obvious cause have usually died from internal injuries sustained in accidents.</i>	Injured cats should be picked up in the manner illustrated (see far right) and gently placed in a suitable container. See notes on 'Transporting your cat to the veterinary surgeon'. Broken limbs should be kept in as natural a position as possible and any external wounds protected from dirt during the journey to the surgery. Try to keep the airway clear by holding the tongue forward and clearing away any fluids.
INFLUENZA (Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis or FVR and Feline Calicivirus or FVC)	<i>There are very infectious virus diseases in cats. Outbreaks occur every summer. The first signs are sneezing, moist or running eyes and nose, sometimes with profuse salivation.</i>	These diseases are very infectious, so isolate your cat and keep him warm and dry. He will usually continue to eat until his nasal passages become congested. Nowadays prompt treatment will save the great majority of cases. Do not take a cat with 'flu into a crowded waiting room; leave him outside in the car, if that is possible, until called in for attention. It is particularly important to ensure the cat drinks fluids, even spoonfeeding if necessary. N.B. It is now possible to vaccinate against these diseases. Ask your vet about this.
BITES	<i>Pet cats are often bitten by other cats. The bites are usually small puncture wounds rather than tears in the skin. Sudden lameness or swelling of one leg or the tail root is often caused by a bite.</i>	When they are puncture wounds they do not drain easily. Antibiotics should only be given professionally; the next condition, an abscess, may develop if the condition is untreated. Keep in a darkened, quiet room until seen by a vet. Never give Aspirin to cats.
ABSCESSSES	<i>An abscess is an infected pus-filled swelling which is frequently the result of falling to treat a bite. Sometimes a large tense lump is noticed; usually the abscess is only noticed after it has burst and produces a large, smelly wound. Abscesses often occur around the head and at the root of the tail.</i>	An intact abscess should be drained and cleaned by your vet. He will give appropriate treatment and tell you how to keep the wound clean. Veterinary treatment will probably still be necessary even after an abscess has burst. It is essential that the wound is kept open until the infection has been eliminated.

First aid for your cat

Most common emergencies	Symptoms	Action
ACUTE DIARRHOEA	<i>Loose or soft motions and a cat which is obviously ill. Diarrhoea in the young kitten can be very dangerous.</i>	Withhold food and give only fluids. Withhold milk temporarily. If diarrhoea is severe or if it persists more than 24 hours, seek professional help.
FELINE INFECTIOUS ENTERITIS (FIE or Panleucopenia)	<i>This is a specific virus infection which often, but not invariably, involves acute diarrhoea. Young kittens contracting it may die before the owner notices any symptoms.</i>	This disease is easily prevented by vaccination, and is so serious that all kittens should be vaccinated between six and 12 weeks. Treatment of the unvaccinated cat with FIE must be undertaken very quickly, but may still be unsuccessful. Prevention is better than cure.
EAR INFECTIONS	<i>The cat will shake its head or scratch at its ears. On closer examination the ear(s) may be found to contain foreign matter which may smell. Tiny white mites may occupy the ear and cause a good deal of irritation.</i>	Pending proper treatment, some relief may be given by putting warm olive oil or medicinal liquid paraffin in the ears. Gently remove any debris which is softened and will come away easily. Do not probe down into the ear or use any spirit preparation.
BONE OR NEEDLE IN THE MOUTH OR THROAT	<i>The cat will show sudden and extreme discomfort, will paw at its mouth and may cough or choke. An acute throat infection can produce similar symptoms.</i>	Open the mouth and see if any foreign body is obviously present which can be removed easily with tweezers. Do not risk doing further damage. Do not offer food, as an anaesthetic may be necessary. Contact your vet as soon as possible.
STOMATITIS (Sore mouth)	<i>Very sore mouth, usually with scale (tartar) on the teeth. The gums are reddened and ulceration may be present. The cat is reluctant to eat or drink, or may do so with its head on one side. There may be one or more loose teeth.</i>	Proper dental treatment under an anaesthetic is usually necessary. This may be accompanied by treatment for the mouth infection. In an emergency, as a temporary measure, bathe the mouth with warm, very dilute salt solution.
POISONING	<i>Usually very obvious and dramatic with a marked hypersensitivity to all stimuli, such as sound, touch and light. (Slug bait is particularly dangerous; made up in bran, it can be attractive to cats.)</i>	Put animal into a quiet, dark room and contact your vet for advice. If possible, take a sample of what has been eaten when you visit the surgery. N.B. Poisoning is relatively uncommon and all the signs can be produced by other conditions.