



HealthyPet.com

[SIGN-IN | Join our Community](#)
[Bookmark this site!](#)

 Site sponsored by:
[HOME](#) | [PRESS ROOM](#)

[ADVANCED SITE SEARCH](#)
[Dog Care](#)
[Cat Care](#)
[Exotic and Bird Care](#)
[Small Mammal Care](#)
[Veterinary Medicine](#)
[Pet Insurance](#)
[Life + Pet Blog](#)
[Pet Memorial](#)
[PetsMatter](#)
[AAHA-Accredited Veterinary Hospital Quick Search](#)

 within

[More hospital search options](#)
[Sign-up for our PetsMatter Newsletter](#)


[Healthy Pet](#) > [Pet Care](#) > [Exotic & Bird Care](#) > [Exotic & Bird Care Article](#)

What To Do in Pet Emergency Situations



JEN REEDER

Los Angeles resident, Andrea Johnson, will never forget the way she learned that chocolate is toxic to dogs.

"It was the holidays, and I always give 1-pound boxes of See's chocolates as gifts," Johnson says. "I had boxes all over the floor of my office to wrap, and put up a barrier to keep out the dogs."

But Johnson and her husband came home one afternoon to find that their Welsh corgi, Nickleby, had found a way past the barrier and eaten over a pound of chocolate.

"He kept throwing up," she says. "I thought he'd just get it out of his system but he didn't stop, so we took him to the vet."

Nickleby's veterinarian pumped his stomach and kept him overnight. Though Johnson had learned the lesson that chocolate is toxic to dogs, apparently Nickleby hadn't.

"As soon as we got him home, he made a beeline for that room!" she laughs.

Nickleby's story has a happy ending, but also underscores how quickly or unexpectedly emergency situations with pets can arise. Being prepared for injuries and emergencies at home, and while traveling, can help keep your pets healthy and safe.

Janna Poll, MBA, SPHR, CMPE and hospital administrator for the Veterinary Referral Center of Colorado (VRCC) – Veterinary Specialty and Emergency Center in Englewood, Colo., says the VRCC hands out thousands of copies of the VRCC Pet Emergency Pamphlet each year to help pet owners understand what to do in pet emergencies.

The emergency practice of the VRCC sees "all types of things," but some of the more typical cases involve paw laceration (cut), ingesting foreign materials such as socks and children's toys, dog fights, seizures, overheating and being hit by cars.

"A very typical injury is a paw laceration," Poll says. "This is often due to sharp ice in the winter, or metal lawn edging. Metal lawn edging can cause very serious paw injuries that can bleed profusely. The bad injuries can cut the pad or between the pads and into the tendons, tough band connecting muscle to bone, which requires surgery to repair."

In this type of emergency, a pet owner may need to muzzle or restrain their dog, flush or clean the wound with saline or clean water, and apply firm bandage pressure until a veterinarian can examine, shave the area and determine if stitches are necessary.

Another common problem is when a pet ingests foreign object, which in many cases can lead to surgical removal of the object if the pet cannot pass the object on its own.

"Paying to have underwear or socks removed from the digestive system of a lab can really teach an expensive lesson on picking up your clothes!" Poll says. Chews such as rawhides or toys like little balls can get stuck in their esophagus, or pets might eat medications. The latter can cause vomiting, diarrhea, an abdomen that is painful to the touch, exhibited lethargy or a "hazed" look or anxious behavior – Poll says it is critical to call an emergency hospital in such situations.

"Dog fights and bites, especially over food or other territorial items, are common in homes with multiple pets," Poll says. "I've been bitten by my loveable Golden Retriever without her realizing it wasn't the other dog her jaw was clamping down on, but my hand."

She stresses that it is very important for people never to attempt to break up a dog fight by putting themselves in the middle of two dogs – an important reason for leashes. However, if one or more of the dogs are not leashed, a person can break up the fight by dousing the animals with water, particularly if there is a hose nearby.

In the case of a seizure in a dog, do not try to restrain a dog or put your hands in their mouth, Poll advises – keep them safe by removing nearby items as there can be a lot of uncontrolled movement during the seizure.

Overheating can be an issue either when hiking or when left in a car. Be sure to carry enough water for your pet. "Owners should always remember that leaving a pet in a car is very, very dangerous," Poll says. "Even in the winter on a mild day with full sun, the inside of a closed car can become life threatening." If a pet overheats, it is best if they lie in a cool pool of water or eat ice cubes – and if they don't spring right back, get them to a veterinarian, she urges.

Another frequent emergency occurs when animals are hit by cars. "Some owners may not see open wounds and think there isn't any damage," Poll says. "There frequently can be internal damage and it can be treatable if caught early. Emergency hospitals can do wonders, but examination is essential."

Finally, there are everyday preparations to help keep your pets safe, such as always having a reliable collar and leash, an ID tag, and keeping the family

Follow us on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube

Copyright © 2012 American Animal Hospital Association | Privacy Policy

vital Signs

Taking a Heart Rate or Pulse

The heartbeat of a dog or cat can be felt at about the point where the left elbow touches the chest (in between the 3rd and 4th rib). Place your hand or stethoscope over this area and count the heartbeats. You can conclude your pet's heart rate by the number of beats per 6 seconds and then times ten. This will be your pet's heart rate.

Pulses can also be felt with a light touch on the inner thigh approximately half way from the hip to the knee, stifle, known as the femoral vein just above the ankle on the outer side of the rear limb known as the tarsal vein or just below the wrist, carpus, and above the large tarsal pad on the inner front limb known as the carpal vein.

Normal Heart and Pulse Rate

Small breed dogs (<30 lbs.): 100-220 beats per minute

Medium to large breed dogs (30+ lbs.):60-180 beats per minute

Puppy (until 1 year old): 60-220 beats per minute

Cats: 140-220 beats per minute

Normal Breathing Rates

Dogs: 10-30 breaths per minute and up to 200 pants per minute

Cats: 24-42 breaths per minute (Note: Panting in a cat can be a sign of serious illness and requires immediate veterinary attention)

Normal Temperatures:

Dogs: 99.5° to 102.5°F

Cats: 100.5° – 102.5° F

Source: *Clinical Textbook for Veterinary Technicians Sixth Edition, Dennis M. McCurnin and Joanna M. Bassert*

First Aid Kit

Carrying a few basic items can ease the stress of simple emergencies when away from home. Start with a small collection of the following:

1. Tweezers
2. Sterile saline (contact lens solution)
3. Roll gauze and gauze sponge
4. Adhesive tape
5. Antibiotic ointment
6. Nylon leash
7. Latex gloves

Source: *VRCC Pet Emergency Pamphlet*

Jen Reeder, a Denver-based freelance journalist, is glad that chocolate is not toxic to humans.

Related Articles

[Pet Water Safety](#)

Note: All content provided on HealthyPet.com, is meant for educational purposes only on health care and medical issues that may affect pets and should never be used to replace professional veterinary care from a licensed veterinarian. This site and its services do not constitute the practice of any veterinary medical health care advice, diagnosis or treatment.

