

First Aid

The following will discuss some of the basics of canine first aid and building your canine first aid kit.

The simplest way to remember whether or not to call your vet is to think "If it was me, would I call my doctor". If the answer is yes, call your vet! The same basic rules for human first aid apply to dogs. Be as observant as possible and make notes. Your dog can't speak so you must be both his eyes and voice to help the doctor diagnose the problem. "He doesn't feel good" won't help the vet, but "he's been off his feed for a day, is drinking tons of water, urinating a lot and has a temperature of 102.5" will give your vet more to go on.

This also applies to trauma. A frantic call saying "he's bleeding" means little or nothing. On the other hand "He was attacked by another dog and is bleeding heavily from a puncture wound on his left flank. His eyes are glazed and he's panting heavily" tells another story. With a little training from your vet, you and he can work hand-in-hand to diagnose your dog.

Here are the basics –

INJURY: No matter what the injury, approach your dog with caution. A dog that normally will not bite may bite when in pain. To be safe, use a muzzle. The most common is one made from the leg of a pair of stockings. Wrap it around the muzzle starting from underneath, around the top then back underneath. Pull snug then tie behind the head. A word of caution - do not apply a muzzle if the dog has any injury to the mouth or nose.

BLEEDING: Controlling hemorrhage is important if excessive bleeding is present. It is best controlled by a pressure bandage. A pressure bandage is a clean towel (or other clean material) applied directly to the wound with slight pressure. If the injury is on a limb you can use a tourniquet. Remember to release the tourniquet every couple of minutes to allow blood flow to the limb.

SHOCK: Signs of shock are muscular weakness, rapid heart rate, pale mucus membranes, rapid shallow breathing, reduced pulse rate, and blood pressure. To treat shock, keep the dog warm (wrap in a blanket) and quiet, and control any hemorrhage. Injury, bleeding and shock are very serious and after taking the initial basic steps call your vet and transport immediately.

You might want to try putting all your dog first-aid supplies in a plastic container with a tight fitting lid. Write your vets phone number on the top with a permanent marker so you won't waste any time looking for it in an emergency. Your first-aid kit should contain –

Rectal Thermometer: Normal rectal temperature is 101-102 degrees.

Peroxide: For flushing wounds, can be used to induce vomiting. Pour 1-2 tablespoons in the back of the throat, repeat until dog vomits.

Kaopectate or Pepto-Bismol: 1 teaspoon per 25 pounds. Repeat every 4-6 hours. Tablets can be used following adult dosage for a 100 pound Newfoundland.

Sterile Saline Solution: Flush eyes as needed.

Neosporin: Antibiotic ointment for scrapes and minor wounds such as tick removal sites.

Aspirin: Dosage of one tablet per 25 pounds, maximum of 3 tablets every 4-6 hours. DO NOT use Tylenol or Advil as they are toxic to a dog's liver and kidneys. You can also give 1 Alleve every 12 hours.

Benadryl: Use for allergic reactions, allergies, hot spots. Dosage is 25 mg capsule per 15-20 pounds. For a Newfoundland that is 100-140 pounds, try 100 mg (can be increased if needed). Repeat every 4-6 hours as needed.

Ear Cleaner: Equal parts of vinegar and alcohol. DO NOT use water!

Old pair of pantyhose: Makes a great muzzle.

Leash and Collar: They just might come in handy.

Clean bath towel: Good for pressure bandages.

Ace-type bandage: Can be used to hold pressure bandage in place, split broken limbs. I highly recommend Vet Wrap as it is 'self-clinging'. Duct tape can be used in an emergency.

Large Syringe: Good for flushing ears and eyes with.

Medicine Dropper: Good for liquid meds, ear meds, etc. when just a few drops are needed.

Tongue Depressors: Keep at least 2 on hand. Make a great splint.

Non-Stick Gauze Pads: To cover open wounds. Get the large ones.

Betadine: For flushing and cleaning scrapes and wounds. Can also use Iodine.

Styptic Powder: Used to stop bleeding when a dog is quicked. You can also use flour or cornstarch in an emergency.

Other items that should be included are: Cotton balls, tweezers, comb, flea & tick spray, blunt tipped scissors, hemostats, ice pack and heat pack.

As with most medical items, **KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN!**

Remember, you and your vet are the first line of defense when it comes to the health of your dog. Speak with your vet and find out what he would like you to include.

Work together - it will benefit your four-footed family member.

This information has been compiled by the Southeastern Newfoundland Club, as part of their comprehensive rescue program. We are grateful for their generosity in sharing all of their hard work.- NCA 2006

