

POINTS TO PAWNDER SERIES

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Pet First Aid: 5 Steps To Prepare For An Emergency

What if your pet was facing a health emergency, and his or her life depended on your quick decisions? Would you know what to do? Pet first-aid may be required for many unexpected injuries and conditions, including puncture wounds, poisoning, choking, heat stroke, breathing difficulties, electrical shock, and car accidents. Advance planning can make the difference between life and death for your pet. There are 5 things you can do TODAY that may help save your pet's life tomorrow.

Five Steps To Prepare For A Pet Emergency

STEP 1: Establish A Pet First-Aid Kit



- Purchase a pet first-aid kit and pet first-aid manual from a pet store or online retailer. Many popular pet stores, including PETSMART and PETCO, sell pet first-aid kits.
- Keep the kit in an accessible location, and make sure you and family members are familiar with its contents and have read the first-aid manual in advance.
- The kit should include, at a minimum, gauze, adhesive tape, nonstick bandages, antibiotic ointment, a clean towel, cotton balls, hydrogen peroxide, isopropyl alcohol, latex gloves, scissors, tweezers, sterile eye wash, an instant cold pack, and a card with phone numbers for your veterinarian, animal poison control center, and nearest 24-hour emergency vet clinic
- Since your pet may lash out if he/she is in pain, make sure you keep a muzzle, large towel, and leash handy to help you contain your pet in an emergency and prevent him/her from biting/scratching.

STEP 2: Recognize An Emergency

- You know your pet, and are in the best position to observe behavior and health changes that may signal an emergency.
- Look out for unusual crying or whining; coughing; bleeding; dizziness; confusion; vomiting; diarrhea; increased urination; excessive drooling; uncontrollable panting; and irregular or difficult breathing.
- If you observe any of these things, contact your veterinarian immediately.
- Many pets will try to mask their pain or illness, so pay close attention!

STEP 3: Post Emergency Contact Numbers Near Your Phone

- Your veterinarian, animal poison control center, and 24-hour emergency vet clinic can often provide basic first-aid instruction via telephone.
- ***It's critical that you have these numbers by the phone, so that in a life and death situation, you don't lose time!***
 - For a partial list of 24-hour Indiana emergency vet clinics, visit www.indiana-paw.com.

- Make sure children and sitters are also aware of these numbers.
- Familiarize yourself with driving directions to the nearest 24-hour emergency vet clinic.
- The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center operates a hotline 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 888-426-4435 for a fee of \$50 per case.

STEP 4: Learn How To Treat Common Pet Injuries

- Many injuries can be treated with common sense and basic first-aid.
 - "One out of four pets could be saved if just one pet first aid technique was applied prior to getting veterinary treatment," according to the American Animal Hospital Association.
- Talk to your veterinarian about how to properly administer first-aid.
- Purchase and read a pet first-aid book (available via pet stores, book stores, online retailers and the Red Cross). The Humane Society of the United States puts out a first-aid book in conjunction with the American Red Cross entitled Pet First Aid: Cats and Dogs – you can purchase it online.
- Contact your local Red Cross Chapter and/or Humane Society to register for a pet first-aid course.

STEP 5: Prevention Is The Best Medicine

- Take steps to prevent emergencies from happening in the first place. For example:
 - Keep your pet indoors, in a fenced yard, or on a leash.
 - Pet-proof your home and make sure medications and cleaners are out of reach and electrical cords are taped down.
 - Keep your pet's vaccinations current.
 - Include pets in your fire escape plans.
 - Take your pet to the vet regularly, and in between visits, check them for health changes.

Suggested Reading

- Humane Society of the United States, "Your Cat's First-Aid Kit" http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet_care/cat_care/keys_to_a_healthy_cat/your_cats_firstaid_kit.html
- Peteducation.com, "Making a First Aid Kit for Your Dog" <http://www.peteducation.com/article.cfm?articleid=2881>
- American Red Cross, "Health & Safety Tips – Pet First Aid" <http://www.redcross.org/services/hss/tips/pet.html>

Important Note: Indiana-PAW's POINTS TO PAWNDER SERIES is intended to provide quick tips to help citizens address common pet health and behavior questions. It is not intended to replace consultation with one's veterinarian and/or a trained behavior specialist.