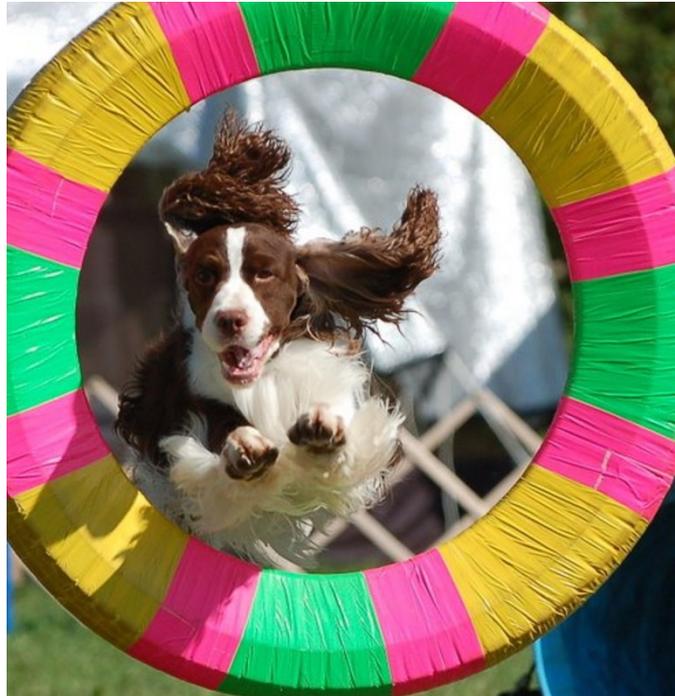


# **CORNWALL AGILITY CLUB**

## **LOOKING AFTER YOUR DOG BASIC FIRST AID**



Cheryl Duce 2014

## **Basic First Aid**

Every year, hundreds of dogs in the UK are involved in road accidents, suffer from heatstroke or swallow poisonous substances. Knowing what to do in an emergency could save your pet's life.

### **When should dog first aid be used?**

Immediately following an accident or an illness. First aid should be restricted to what is necessary to save a dog's life, to reduce pain and therefore to stop suffering until the animal can receive attention from a veterinary surgeon. It is usually much better to take the dog to the vet, rather than calling the vet to you as they will be better equipped at the surgery to carry out the treatment required.

### **Who can carry out first aid?**

First aid can be administered to an animal by any one. It is not necessary to make a diagnosis of injury to administer effective first aid, indeed diagnosis can legally only be made by a qualified veterinary surgeon.

### **Be prepared**

An emergency situation will require you to be speedy, calm and most importantly safe. Think slowly but act fast.

It is vital to remember that a sudden injury or illness will cause your dog to be potentially very scared, painful and in shock. In this very high stress situation even very docile dogs can bite and you must ensure your own safety. Having a muzzle or a piece of material (eg an old tie) to use as a tape tie will allow you to administer to your dog confidently.

### **Never rush straight to the vets**

It maybe that emergencies are seen at another site, or that the vet could give you vital advice before you travel with your dog. It is also possible that there is no vet at the surgery at that specific time.

**Never give an injured or sick dog anything to eat or drink unless the vet tells you to do so**

## **In emergency situations**

- First ensure the safety of yourself and others'. Keep calm and assess the situation before acting. Injured animals are frightened and in pain and may try to bite anyone who touches them.
- Contact the vet. Keep your vet's phone number to hand and know the name of the practice.
- Always phone first, whatever the situation, as there may not always be a vet available but staff may be able to suggest immediate action you can take.
- Have a pen handy in case another number is given. Treatment can usually be provided more quickly if the dog is taken to the surgery, rather than if the vet is called out.
- Never give human medicines to a dog – may will do more harm than good.
- Drive carefully when taking the patient to the surgery.
- If you do get bitten, see your doctor.

## Is it an emergency?

Sometimes, outside normal hours, it is difficult to decide whether urgent attention is needed. You can always call and ask for advice.

You should phone the vet if:

- Your pet seems weak, is reluctant to get up, or is dull and depressed.
- There is difficulty breathing, or it is noisy or rapid, or if there is continual coughing causing distress.
- There is repeated vomiting particularly with young or elderly animals. Diarrhoea is less serious, unless severe, bloody or the animal seems weak or unwell. Feed small amounts of a bland diet (boiled chicken or white fish, and see a vet if it persists for over a day.
- Your dog appears to be in severe pain or discomfort.
- Your pet is trying to urinate or defecate and is unable to. Blockage of the bladder sometimes occurs, especially in males, and can kill if not treated urgently.
- There are sudden difficulties with balance,
- A bitch with suckling puppies is agitated, shaking and shivering and will not settle. It could be eclampsia, which needs urgent treatment.



## Road accidents

Prevention is better than cure. Even a well-behaved dog should be kept on a lead anywhere near traffic, including slow moving vehicles. Do not have the collar so loose that the dog can get free.

If the worst happens, be aware of other cars. Talk gently to the dog as you approach. Move slowly and avoid making sudden movements. Put a lead on if possible and, if necessary, muzzle before handling. If your dog can walk go to the vet even if there appears to be no pain. There may be internal injuries that are not immediately obvious.

If the dog cannot walk, small dogs can be picked up by placing one hand at the front of the chest and the other under the hindquarters. Improvise a stretcher for larger dogs with a coat or a blanket. If the dog is paralysed there may be a spinal injury, so try to find something rigid, such as a board slide the patient gently on to this if possible. *Cover with a blanket to reduce heat loss.*



"Do you want the real remedy?  
STOP CHASING CATS!"

## Bleeding

Keep the dog quiet and calm. Put on a tight bandage. Improvise with a towel or some clothing if necessary. If blood is seeping through, apply another tight layer.



For places you cannot bandage, press a pad firmly onto the wound and hold it in place. Get to the vet straight away.

If you have bandaging materials, place a non-adherent dressing on the wound and cover with swabs or cotton bandage. Then place a layer of cotton wool. Cover this with more cotton bandage. Stick this to the hair at the top with surgical tape, and cover the whole with adhesive bandage or tape. Do not stick Elastoplast to the dogs' hair. When bandaging limbs, the foot should be included or it may swell up. Never leave a bandage on for more than 24 hours.

## Broken bones

Deal with serious bleeding but do not apply a splint –it is painful and can cause the bone to break through the skin. Confine the patient for transport to the vet. Smaller dogs can be put in a box.

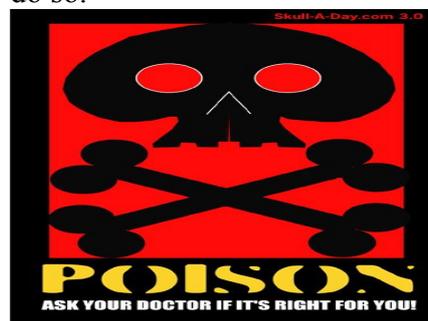
## Burns and scalds

Run cold water over these for at least five minutes, then contact the vet. Do not apply ointments or creams but if there is going to be a delay getting to the vets you can apply saline soaked dressing to the area. Keep the patient warm.



## Poisoning

Try to find packaging from the substances swallowed and have it with you when you phone the vet. If chewing plants is suspected, try to find out the identity of the plant. Call the vet immediately. Do not make your dog sick unless the vet says to do so.



## Swollen tummy

If this happens suddenly, treat it seriously, especially if the dog is a deep chested breed such as a boxer or mastiff. There may also be gulping, dribbling of saliva and attempts to vomit. It could mean there is a life-threatening twist in the stomach. Phone the vet immediately – do not delay.

## Ball stuck in throat

Get to the vet quickly. Or you may be able to push the ball out by pushing on the throat/neck from the outside.

If the gums or tongue are turning blue or the dog has collapsed try the following. You will need someone to help you. One person holds the mouth open, while the other reaches inside. Be careful not to get bitten. If you cannot pull the ball out, lay the pet on their side. Push down suddenly and sharply on the tummy just behind the last rib. The person holding the mouth should be ready to grab the ball as it appears.

## Coat contamination

If a substance such as paint or tar has got onto the coat or paws, prevent the dog from licking, as it may be toxic. Use a Smart Collar obtainable from your vets if you don't have one. You may be able to clip off small areas of affected hair. Never use turpentine or paint removers on your dog. You can sometimes remove paint and other substances by bathing the dog in washing up liquid, but if a large area is affected, see the vet.

## Heat stroke

If on a warm or hot day your dog is panting heavily and is distressed and especially if the dog is short nosed (like a boxer), overweight or has been playing or exercising, think heat stroke ! Dogs eliminate heat through panting however if the temperature of the environment is too hot and humid panting becomes ineffective. Put the dog somewhere cool, in a draught. Wet the coat with tepid water (cold water contracts the blood vessels in the skin and slows heat loss) and phone the vet. You can offer a small amount of water.



## Fits

If your dog is having a fit, do not try to hold or comfort the dog, as this provides stimulation, which may prolong the fit. Darken the room and reduce noise. Remove items, especially anything electrical, away from the dog so they cannot cause injury. Pad furniture with cushions. Call the vet.

## Fights

If your dog seems shocked, dull or distressed after a fight, call the vet. Otherwise, look at the wound. Puncture wounds to the head or body mean you should consult a vet right away. Injuries to the limbs may not need immediate treatment, unless severe or very painful, but take the dog to the vet within 24 hours, as antibiotics may be required.



## Eye injuries

If the eye is bulging out of the socket, apply a wet dressing, prevent rubbing or scratching and call the vet. If chemicals have got into the eye, flush with water repeatedly, preferably .



## Drowning

Never put yourself at risk by attempting to rescue a dog.

Wipe away material from the mouth and nose. Hold the dog upside down by the hind legs until the water has drained out. Give resuscitation if breathing has stopped. Even if your pet seems to recover, always see the vet as complications are common.

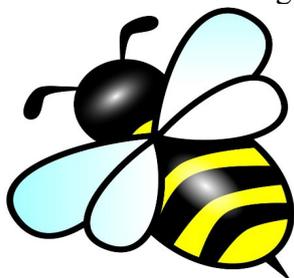
## Electric shock

If a high voltage supply is involved (non-domestic, for example power lines) do not approach. Call the police.

In the home, turn off power first. If this is impossible, you may be able to use a dry non-metallic item, like a broom handle, to push the dog away from the power source, if breathing has stopped, give resuscitation. Call the vet immediately.

## Stings

Pull out the sting below the poison sac, then bathe the area in water or use a solution of bicarbonate of soda if available. Applying ice will help to soothe. If the sting is in the mouth or throat, contact the vet as it may swell and interfere with breathing.



## Basic resuscitation

### A. Airway

**The first step in animal CPR (like human CPR), after determining that the animal is non-responsive, is to obtain an open airway. You should not continue past A – Airway, until this step has been achieved.**

1. Carefully pull the tongue straight out of the animal's mouth to open the airway.

***WARNING: even an unresponsive dog may bite by instinct !***

2. Make sure that the neck is reasonably straight; try to bring the head in-line with the neck.

***Warning: Do not over-straighten the neck in cases where neck/head trauma exists.***

3. Attempt 2 rescue breaths, by closing the mouth, and performing mouth-to-nose ventilations. If they go in with no problems continue to B – Breathing.
4. If not, reposition the neck and try step 3 again.
5. Visibly inspect the airway by looking into the mouth, and down the throat for foreign objects occluding the airway. Unlike human CPR rescuers may reach

into the airway and remove foreign objects that are visible.

6. If you still can't breathe into the animal proceed to the Heimlich manoeuvre.

### A. Heimlich

**If you were unable to clear an object from the airway in A-Airway, you will need to do the Heimlich**

**Manoeuvre:**

1. Turn the animal upside down with its back against your chest.
2. Hug the animal with your fist in your hand just below the rib-cage (for cats, just squeeze 1 hand in the same place)
3. With both arms, give 5 sharp thrusts (bear hugs) to the abdomen. Perform each thrust as if it is the one that will expel the object.
4. Stop, check to see if the object is visible in the airway, if so, remove it and give 2 mouth-nose rescue breaths. If the breaths do not go in, go back to step 1.

**IMPORTANT: Do not proceed with CPR even if the animal goes into cardiac arrest. You must clear the airway first.**

### B. Breathing

**After achieving a patient airway, one must determine whether the animal is breathing, and whether this breathing is effective:**

1. Carefully pull the tongue straight out of the animal's mouth to open the airway.
2. Make sure that the neck is reasonably straight; try to bring the head in-line with the neck.
3. Breathe at 12 breaths per minute (1 every 5 seconds)

With each breath just make the chest rise (do not over inflate, especially on a small animal)

**Important: If the breaths do not go in, stop and return to A-airway!**

4. Proceed to C-Circulation, while continuing breathing support is necessary

## C. Circulation

**This is the final step of CPR and should only be started after the A-airway and B-breathing steps have been completed:**

1. Make sure that there are no major (pooling/spurting blood) points of bleeding. Control as necessary by applying pressure with your hand.
2. Lay the animal on its right side
3. Locate your hands where its left elbow touches the chest, approximately the middle of the rib-cage (for cats use 1 hand in a squeezing motion).
4. Compress the chest 15 times followed by 2 rescue breaths (3 compressions every 2 seconds)

Compress:

½ “ – small dogs and cats

1” – medium dogs

1.5” – large dogs

6. Repeat as necessary

- Put the animal on their side



During an emergency it is very important that you remain calm. Animals can sense your unease, but cannot understand what is happening and you can't tell them.

Your body language is very important. Be calm, yet deliberate in your actions.

When you determine that you either have corrected the life-threatening problem, or are unable to stabilize the animal, you should transport to the nearest emergency veterinary hospital.

### **Your first aid kit should include:**

- Bandages – a roll of self-adhesive or crepe bandage (5cm wide)
- Conforming/open weave bandages (2.5cm width)
- Some non-adhesive absorbent dressings (5cm x 5cm) to cover open wounds
- Surgical sticky tape
- A box of cotton wool
- A box of sterile absorbent gauze
- Blunt ended scissors, preferably curved
- A thick towel
- A Smart collar



### **REFERENCES**

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