

# **Emergency Preparedness for Pet Owners**

**Veterinary Care Specialists  
and  
VCS Pets First**



**2010 FIRST EDITION**



Veterinary Care Specialists was a dream that took a long time to become reality. As far back as the late 1980's we recognized that Western Oakland and Eastern Livingston counties needed an emergency hospital for the areas pets. When we returned to Michigan in the early 1990's the community had grown enough to support a referral and emergency hospital that was focused on staying small, spending time with each client and patient, keeping the humanity in the profession of veterinary medicine.

Veterinary Care Specialists opened in December, 1997. We have worked hard building the business through the assistance of family, friends and a lot of wonderful staff members.

In the Spring of 2009, we introduced VCS Pets First, a general medicine service. VCS Pets First is the next step towards providing complete veterinary care to our community. We are not done growing and we are looking forward to many exciting years to come!

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## Introduction:

**E**very concerned pet owner is worried that they will not be prepared when that inevitable accident occurs or when disaster may strike. Applying first aid to your pet is a matter of being mentally prepared and having the appropriate supplies. From that point, the rest is common sense.



This information is a brief summary of the basics of first aid for dogs and cats and some ideas of how to be sure your pets are cared for in the event of a disaster.

## Preventing Emergencies:

**T**he key to emergency and disaster preparedness is implementing techniques that avoid their creation. Keeping toxins, chemicals and medications out of pets reach and having a knowledge of the common pet toxins in your environment prevents poisoning. Using identification techniques, fencing yards, using leashes and training your pets, prevents them from being lost or injured. Being observant of your pets behavior, eating habits, weight and activity, helps identify illnesses early so intervention can be more successful.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, but sometimes, even under the best of circumstances, accidents happen and being prepared for the infrequent calamity will help keep you, your pet and your family safe.

Microchips are small devices that are placed beneath your pets skin and allow your pet to be identified quickly and easily. Most rescues, humane organizations and veterinary hospitals have scanners that will read a microchip.



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## Basic First Aid Supplies:

Porous adhesive tape	Do not use Band-Aids or tapes used on people as they will adhere too tightly to hair
Alcohol pads	To clean scissors or other instruments being used.
Saline eyewash	You may use the ophthalmic rinse that is used for cleaning contacts and rinsing eyes. Saline is to be used to flush wounds and rinse eyes.
Gauze, cloth bandages,	
Muzzle that fits your pet	
Noose leash	This is a simple leash that can be placed around your pets neck to prevent escape
Dosing syringe, eye dropper	To flush wounds
Cotton balls and gauze squares	
Duct Tape	Do not apply to hair coat, use to secure towels or bandage material
Gloves (leather and disposable gloves)	To aide in handling painful or fearful pets. Disposable gloves to clean and handle wounds
Hydrogen peroxide	To induce vomiting
Rectal thermometer	Normal temperature 100-102.5F
Petroleum based lubricant	For thermometer and to prevent more debris from entering wounds
Providone-iodine solution	Dilute with saline to flush wounds
Scissors	To cut bandages and hair around wounds
Tweezers	To remove debris from wound
Towels/Blankets	Use to keep your pet warm



**Place Additional Pet Information Here**  
**Attach Photos to This Page**

## Disaster Preparedness Kit:

Photographs of pets	
Appropriately sized crate	<b>For each animal</b>
3 days of food and water and dishes	Change supplies every 6 months
Toys, bedding	
Kitty litter, pan, scoop	
Newspaper	To line crates
Leash and collars, harnesses	Remember that you may have to keep pets on a leash or tether outside.
Medical Records	Vaccine information and any information about health issues

## Normal Vital Parameters

	Pulse/ min	Respiration /min	Temperature
Cat	120-140	16-40	101.5-102.5
Puppy	120-160	15-40	101-102.5
Small - Medium Dog	100-160	18-34	101-102.5
Medium-Large Dog	70-120	18-34	101-102.5

## Common Poisons and Toxins



### Poisonous Plants

Lillies (cats)  
Azalea  
Rhubarb leaves  
Shamrock  
Oleander  
Foxglove

### Household Toxins

Cigarettes  
Chocolate  
Caffeine  
Xylitol (sugarless gum)  
Grapes/raisins  
Raw onions  
Ibuprofen  
Prescription drugs  
Acetaminophen  
Bread dough  
Vitamins  
Diet Pills  
Antihistamines



### Common Poisons

Ethylene glycol (antifreeze)  
Rat poisons  
Mole Bait  
Snail Bait  
Zinc, Iron, Lead  
Batteries  
Insecticides  
Herbicides  
Bleach

### Signs of Poisoning

- ◆ Weakness
- ◆ Confusion
- ◆ Vomiting
- ◆ Diarrhea
- ◆ Drooling
- ◆ Agitation
- ◆ Seizures
- ◆ Collapse

*A more detailed list is available at  
[www.ASPCA.com](http://www.ASPCA.com)*

## What to do in case of a toxin or poison ingestion by a pet.....

1. Call emergency veterinary services to establish whether you should induce emesis (make your pet vomit). Do not induce emesis unless you get the advice of a veterinarian. There are cases when inducing vomiting can do harm. **Peroxide given orally, a tablespoon at a time, can make a pet vomit.**
2. Many times, even if you catch the poison ingestion early, your pet is at risk further consequences of the toxin ingestion. Often times intravenous fluids, activated charcoal, blood pressure monitoring and other types of supportive care is necessary. Implementing the appropriate treatments in a timely manner can mean the difference between life and death! Take your pet to the nearest veterinary emergency facility for continued care. If you have consulted a poison hotline, write down their number and your case number so the veterinarian may call with questions.

## How to handle an injured pet

When a pet is injured it can be extremely stressful for both of you. You must stay calm, this will help your pet calm down and it will make it easier for you to aid them.

1. If your pet is non-ambulatory, do not move them.
2. If your pet can move, place a leash on them so they do not run away.
3. Apply a muzzle to any pet that is in pain or is trying to bite
4. Apply direct pressure to any bleeding wounds
5. Move recumbent pets on a board or stretcher.
6. Transfer your pet to the closest emergency facility.

## Techniques for safe handling

Although our pets are members of our family and usually enjoy being handled and cared for, when a pet is injured pain, stress, anxiety and fear can all come into play and make an otherwise cooperative dog or cat dangerous to handle. Also, you may have to move the animal quickly to prevent further injury or transport them to an emergency facility. This is why you should have a muzzle that fits your pet as part of your emergency kit.

### Muzzling

A muzzle is a safe, non painful way of keeping your pets mouth shut so they do not have an opportunity to bite. Muzzles can be purchased at pet stores and are made in a variety of sizes to fit your particular pet. They are also made with a different materials, heavy fabric muzzles are easy to use, safe, non-painful, and effectively prevent biting.



**A modified muzzle can be made out of a slip leash or belt.**

This type of muzzle is less reliable and more uncomfortable, but in a pinch it will help. keep you and



### **Be Cautious When Moving Injured Pets**

A flat piece of wood or large blanket can be used to create a stretcher that will allow you to transport an immobile animal without causing further harm by moving damaged body parts. When a pet is injured they should be minimally moved until they are fully evaluated.

## The Slip Leash

It is a good idea to have a slip leash available in your emergency kit and in your car. It can be stored in a glove box.

It is a safe way of restraining an animal from running, particularly if they don't have a collar. Just slip it over their head.



## Managing Wounds

1. **Actively Bleeding Wounds** - Use gauze bandage material or clean fabric or paper towel to place on area of hemorrhage and apply direct pressure. Depending on the magnitude of the wound it may take some time for the bleeding to stop. Continue to apply pressure until the patient has arrived at the emergency care facility.
2. **Wound that is not actively bleeding** - Clip any hair or remove any large pieces of debris in the wound. Gently flush the wound with saline to remove any dirt. Then apply a light wrap over the wound and transport your pet to receive additional wound care at the veterinary hospital

### Why don't you put tourniquets on limbs to stop bleeding?

Tourniquets cut off valuable blood supply to injured appendages and if inappropriately or poorly applied can lead to the loss of the limb.

Direct pressure, applied to a hemorrhaging wound is one of the most effective techniques to stop bleeding and preserve the health of surrounding tissues.

**Squirt Bottles of Saline Eye Rinse** are great to flush wounds out since the fluid is expelled forcefully and debris in the wound can then be easily rinsed

## Broken Bones (Fractures)

Do not try to stabilize a fractured limb. Misapplication of a splint or other type of wrap could cause further damage and additional pain for your pet.

If your pet can walk, assist them in moving so they do not have to use the fractured limb. If they are unable to walk, place them on a board or stretcher and attempt to move them so that the fractured limb is not allowed to dangle or move excessively.

*Do the best you can to identify the insect, spider or snake that bit your pet. However it is not necessary to kill it!!!!*



There is a vaccine for rattlesnake bites that is commonly administered out west where the snakes are far more common and poisonous

## Insect Bites and Stings

One of the most common outdoor injury is a bee sting or other insect bite. Usually these result in local redness and swelling. If stingers have been left behind they may be removed so the injury does not worsen.

**Sometimes a pet will develop an allergic reaction to a bite. They will develop hives, facial swelling and itching. Watch this pet closely for signs of respiratory difficulty and take them to a veterinarian for treatment.**

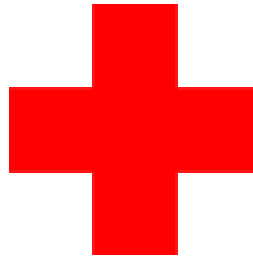
- ◆ **Spider bites can cause severe tissue damage in the area surrounding the bite. There is no way to prevent this damage once bitten. The wounds should be monitored closely.**
- ◆ **Mississauga Rattlesnakes here in Michigan are not very poisonous, but the size of the pet bitten and the location where they received the bite may influence your pets reaction . Local tissue damage and subsequent events can make your pet very ill and some pets have died as a result of a Mississauga bite.**

**SEEK IMMEDIATE CARE FOR SPIDER AND SNAKE BITES**

## Resuscitation

Resuscitation is the process of aiding the critically ill or injured pet and helping them in becoming more stable. In this instance so that the pet can be stabilized for transportation to a hospital.

1. Move your pet to a safe area
2. Check the ABC's
  - Airway– is the chest moving?, air moving through mouth/nostrils?
  - Breathing– Assist pet if not breathing (see below)
  - Circulation– Check for heart beat, by placing hand on chest
3. Keep your pet warm



### Step 1 Breathing

#### If the pet is not breathing:

- ◆ Place the pet right side down
- ◆ Pull the tongue slightly forward, not out of the mouth.
- ◆ Remove any material blocking the airway.
- ◆ Keep head and neck aligned to keep an open airway
- ◆ Do not lift the head
- ◆ Take in a breath
- ◆ If you can cover the nose and mouth, do so. If it is a larger dog, breath into the nose and hold the mouth shut. Be sure to create a tight seal with your mouth.
- ◆ Exhale into the animals nose, giving enough air to see the chest gently rise.

## When Should I Perform CPR?

*CPR performed when it is not necessary could harm you and your pet, carefully evaluate the animal before performing CPR*

The pet should be :

1. Unconscious and unresponsive
2. Not breathing
3. Have no palpable pulse or heartbeat

## Step 2 Circulation

### Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)

- ◆ Locate the heart– bend the left elbow over the chest. Where the point of the elbow rests is the area that the heart is located.
- ◆ Place both hands, one over the other, fingers laced in that area.
- ◆ Lock elbows and begin compressions. Apply enough pressure to push the chest inward 2 inches for a large dog, 1 inch for a small dog or cat.
- ◆ Perform 15 compressions over approximately 10 seconds, then provide a breath.
- ◆ After one minute check for a pulse
- ◆ Add an abdominal squeeze after each breath, this moves blood back to the heart. Place one hand along the back and the other on the abdomen, then gently squeeze toward the heart.
- ◆ Check for a pulse after each minute or after every 4 cycles.

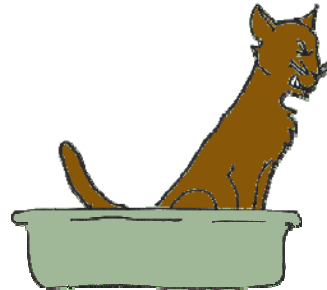
#### When Should I Stop?

CPR, even in humans, is successful about 18-30% of the time. After 15 minutes, if you are unable to feel a pulse or see any demonstrable signs of success, you have done all that you can do.

### Urinary Blockage

Urinary obstruction is a common emergency in cats and less commonly seen in the dog. Male cats and dogs are most often affected. Signs of a urinary obstruction include:

- ◆ Decreased or absent urine production
- ◆ Straining to urinate, attempting to urinate more
- ◆ Lethargy, weakness
- ◆ Painful abdomen



A urinary obstruction is a medical emergency. Your pet should be immediately transported to a veterinary medical facility

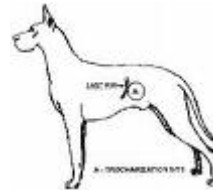
### Bloat / GDV (gastric dilatation and volvulus)

Bloat and GDV are conditions affecting dogs. Bloat is a condition where the stomach is distended usually with food or gas. GDV occurs when the stomach changes from its normal position and flips. Despite many scientific studies the cause for GDV has not been identified.

Both conditions are medical emergencies. GDV, however, is life threatening.

Common signs are:

1. Bloated or distended abdomen
2. Discomfort, cannot lay down or rest
3. Non-productive vomiting or vomiting foam



If your dog has GDV they should be seen by a veterinarian immediately and will require immediate stabilization and surgical intervention.

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**Dystocia  
(difficulty giving birth)**

Gestation period (time from conception to delivery) for a dog is 63-64 days and 63-65 days for a cat.

When animals give birth they usually seek a quiet, stress free area. It is best that you respect their desire and not encourage a lot of activity around the pet during delivery. Most dogs and cats do not need our assistance in delivering their babies. However, it is important to watch them to be sure that they do not develop life threatening complications.

- **Get an x-ray taken prior to the birth(s) so you know how many newborns to expect!**
- As a general rule we suggest that there be only an hour between puppies or kittens delivered. Although successful births can have much longer delivery times, waiting longer than an hour can increase the chance of an unsuccessful birth.
- After 15 minutes of active labor, without producing a pup or kitten, the pet should be seen by a veterinarian.
- Typically, a mother does not require your help in delivering, cleaning, drying the newborn and the umbilicus does not need to be tied off.
- Be sure the birthing environment is draft free and is approximately 95 F.



Eye Injuries , Choking and Fights

### Eye Injuries

**Most eye injuries are a medical emergency. The eye is fragile and damage can quickly lead to blindness.**



- **Corneal injuries:** The cornea is the clear cover of the eye. Corneal injuries are the most common. Signs of a damaged cornea are keeping the eyelids closed, pain and a small pupil.
- **Conjunctivitis** is a reddening of the tissues around the eye. This could be from an irritant like dust, the spray of a skunk, etc. **It is safe to rinse a pet's eyes with saline in an attempt to remove any debris that may remain in the eye and surrounding tissues.**
- **Blunt trauma**— any blow to the head and face that damages the eye must be evaluated by a veterinarian immediately.
- Sometimes blunt trauma leads to the eye popping out (called **proptosis**). The eye should be flushed with saline and it should be protected from further trauma with artificial tears or a sterile KY ointment. The patient should be presented to a veterinarian.

### Choking

**Exercise extreme caution when aiding a choking animal as it is very easy to get bitten!!!**

1. Sweep the mouth, take care to not push the object further back in the mouth.
2. Hold the pet upside down to make the object drop from their mouth
3. Do the Heimlich—Hold the pet in a seated position, place one fist below the rib cage, then grasp it with your other hand. Squeeze briskly in and up 4 to 5 times.
4. Back blows— 4-5 blows between the shoulder blades.
5. If unconscious place the pet as you would for resuscitation. Apply 4-5 brisk thrusts over the lower rib cage area. Perform CPR if necessary.

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### Fights

Dog and cat fights result in wounds that are infected and must be attended to immediately. **Wounds should not be cleaned with peroxide. Wounds should be flushed with saline to remove debris when possible.**

- When dogs attack they often grab the neck area and can damage the trachea, major blood vessels and the esophagus.
- Dogs shake the animal they attack and initially an attacked animal may appear unscathed, but internal damage may be present and requires intervention.

### How to Break Up a Dog Fight

Never get your hands in the middle of an animal fight. You and a partner should grab each animal's tails and pull to separate the animals. This keeps the humans from being bit!



### How To Prevent Dog Fights

- Do not feed dogs together.
- Fences make good neighbors.
- Invisible fences don't keep dogs out!
- Know your dog, don't place them in situations where a fight might start.

### Cat Fights

Cat fights usually result in wounds to the face and neck, and tail and pelvic area .  
When cats fight they may also spread diseases like Feline Leukemia, Rabies and other often



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We are proud to have achieved all the requirements necessary to be an American Animal Hospital Association Accredited hospital

