

# First Aid for Pets



By Arrin M. Colgan, DVM

Compliments of



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## INTRODUCTION

Accidents happen. Your pet gets out and cuts his leg. Something is making your pet itch like crazy. Your pet eats something disgusting and gets diarrhea. A storm came up and your pet is cowering under the couch. What do you do? Be Prepared! This book will tell you how to do that.



**All kinds of things can happen to our pets.** The good news is that many of them are minor and you can treat them at home. The first thing you need to do, though, is take a deep breath and calm down! If you are panicky, that will make it difficult for you to think, and it will make your pet anxious. Then figure out if it requires emergency care.



**A good rule is how your pet is feeling.** If he can't move well, won't eat anything, or seems to be in pain, we should look at him. It still may not be serious, but you want someone examining him to make sure.

**Follow your instincts.** If something worries you about how your pet looks or acts, don't wait. It's always better to have an exam and discover it's nothing serious, than to wait too long and the problem gets worse.



Some things you shouldn't try to treat at home. These are true emergencies requiring professional care quickly.



Aubrey is running an ECG on Zuko

**Emergencies** include the following:

- Bleeding that you doesn't stop within a few minutes
- A pet that won't use a leg at all
- Pets that are hit by a car or have other trauma (even if they look OK)
- Problems breathing, stretching the neck out to breathe, breathing with the mouth open, or gasping for breath
- Unconsciousness or very lethargic
- Vomiting several times within an hour
- Diarrhea that is intense and your pet is listless
- A dog that looks bloated
- A seizure that doesn't stop within a few minutes or starts up again
- A male cat that is sitting or straining in the litter box or you think is constipated
- A male dog trying to urinate but little if any urine is coming out
- A bulging eye or one that looks popped out or your pet won't open an eye
- Any pet that seems to be very painful
- A pet that stretches forward with the butt in the air (this usually means a painful abdomen)
- Certain poisons need to be treated immediately

**If you suspect an emergency, bring your pet to a vet ASAP.** We can successfully treat many serious problems. However, the sooner your pet is seen, the better.

### First Aid Kit



The first step toward being prepared is to have the tools you need to treat your pet. You can buy ready-made first aid kits for pets or make your own. **The important thing is to have items together in one place and know where it is.** You also need to know what every item is used for and how to use it properly. We can help you if needed.

Have the phone number of the emergency clinic (U of I: 217-333-5300) as well as a pet poison control center (1-800-213-6680) in your first aid kit or in your phone.

Include a muzzle and have a blanket handy to wrap up your pet. Pets in pain may bite so it's important to keep yourself and anyone helping you safe. Have a leash or carrier handy in case you need to leave quickly.

Try to keep an updated copy of your pet's records and a list of medications your pet takes in your emergency kit and bring them with you.

## Normals

It helps to know normal values for dogs and cats. This can help you decide whether your pet is sick or how serious it might be.

**Temperature** between 100° and 102°

**Heart rate** 100-130 beats per minute for dogs and 110-140 for cats

**Respiration** 22 breaths per minute for dogs and 26 for cats

An increased temperature can be due to a fever or heat stroke. A lower than normal temperature might indicate shock. A high heart rate is common when your pet is in pain or has heart problems. Increased breathing rates can be due to heart or respiratory problems or stress. Minor changes in any of these can be normal too.

Use a rectal thermometer to take your pet's temperature. Follow the thermometer's instructions for proper usage. Put petroleum jelly on the tip, lift your pet's tail, and insert the thermometer into the rectum. Have someone help hold your pet so he doesn't try to walk away! Leave the thermometer in place for the required time. Warning: Cats hate this and will usually try to climb away.



**Hint: Get the quickest digital thermometer you can find to make it easier.**

The best place to feel the heartbeat on the chest is behind the left elbow between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> ribs. Place 2 or 3 fingers over this area. If you can feel the beats, count how many occur within 15 seconds and multiply by 4 to get the beats per minute. You may also be able to feel the femoral pulse. This is located on the inside of the back leg up near the body. The jugular pulse is on either side of the throat.



**The heart is located behind the elbow as indicated by the red circle.**



**The femoral pulse is located on the inside of the back legs.**

You determine breathing rate by how many breaths occur within one minute. Count each rise and fall of the chest as one.



Learn how to find the values in your pet before you need them. Practice at home. This way you will also know what is normal for your pet. We can show you how if you need help.

## Muzzles

Any pet will bite if it's in pain or terrified. Even if your dog would never bite you under normal circumstances, these are not normal circumstances! Muzzles are invaluable to protect people from being bitten. **Always, always protect yourself and others!** There are several styles of dog and cat muzzles available, including some for short-nosed dogs. Go to a pet store and look them over. Fit it on your pet to make sure it fits properly and you know how to use it. We will be happy to help you.

You can make a muzzle for a dog using a long strip of cloth or a leash. Practice this to make sure you understand how to do it. Your dog can breathe through his nose easily with this muzzle. However, it will prevent panting. If your dog is panting heavily, he may become overheated.



1. Make a loop in the leash and place snugly on the dog's muzzle with ends on top.



2. Bring ends underneath the bottom jaw and cross them.



3. Bring ends up over neck and tie snugly behind ears.

For dogs that have short noses and cats, this muzzle will not work. Rather, use a cup to make a muzzle. You need a cup (plastic or disposable) and two strips of cloth or rope (shoelaces work well).



1. Cut out the bottom of the cup and make 2 holes in each side near the top of the cup. Tie a long cloth or rope to each side hole.



2. Place cup on face and tie the cloth or rope snugly behind the ears.



Don't try to put a muzzle on your pet if he is snapping at you, baring his teeth, or a cat is hissing. It's difficult to put a muzzle on an angry pet, and it's too easy to be injured. If you cannot muzzle your pet, throw a thick blanket like a comforter over them and scoop them up to transport them to a vet. If your dog is too big to be carried and won't be muzzled, use a thick blanket over his head and get help. **Always, always protect yourself and others!**

## Transporting Your Pet

Simple injuries won't require anything special for transportation to the veterinary clinic. A dog that can walk can usually get into the car by himself. Have him lie down on the car seat or in the back. Ideally use a pet restraint harness to avoid further injury in the case of an accident. A carrier works well for smaller pets. Belting it in will prevent it from sliding to the floor in case of sudden braking. **Before doing anything, muzzle your pet to prevent him from biting you if he is in pain.**



Ideally, have someone else drive! When riding, avoid carrying a pet in your arms since it's too easy to jostle your pet, possibly worsening the situation.

Take more precautions if the injury is more serious. Support your pet's back or a broken leg. If your pet is having trouble breathing, allow him to choose the most comfortable position. If you lay him down on his side, try to lay him on the injured side. If only one lung has been damaged, this allows the good lung to have less pressure on it. Your pet may breathe easier this way.

**If you suspect a back or neck injury**, you need a firm, rigid surface. Use anything you have at home. A cutting board, cookie sheet, ironing board, piece of plywood, several layers of heavy cardboard, even a large, heavy book can work.



Place the board (or whatever you are using) next to your pet. Place one hand beneath his shoulders and one under the hips. With your pet's back facing you and the board, slide him onto it. Try to keep the back from bending the entire time you are moving him. You may need to hold his head steady too.

Don't put a blanket under him. You want the surface he's lying on to be firm. Once he is on the board, put a blanket over him. Put two or three strips of duct tape over the blanket to secure it to the board and to prevent your pet from moving.

**If you are sure there is no back or neck injury**, use a towel or blanket as a stretcher. For large dogs, you will need two people to help carry. If the dog is awake, put a couple ties around the dog so he can't move and fall out of the blanket.



This technique is much easier with two people.

**If your pet can walk but is unsteady** or only the front



Blankets or sheets work well since they are longer.

legs work, put a towel or blanket under the pet's belly and lift up. This sling will help the pet walk. Do not use this technique if your pet is having stomach pain.

While in transport, call the emergency clinic to let them know that you are coming. This will give them time to prepare for you and get your pet help even sooner. Don't forget to bring your ID, a form of payment, and your pet's records.

## BLEEDING – WOUND CARE

### Bleeding

When a wound is bleeding, put pressure on it with a clean gauze pad. You may need to hold pressure for several minutes. If the pad becomes soaked with blood, apply more pads or a cloth. Do not remove the first one. If the bleeding continues after a few minutes or if pads keep getting soaked, it's time to go to the clinic. **Never apply a tourniquet unless the bleeding is completely uncontrollable.**

If you see blood from the mouth, try to see where it's coming from. **BE CAREFUL! Don't do it unless you are absolutely sure you won't be bitten!** Puppies and kittens go through a teething stage when their adult teeth come in. It's not common to see blood, however. You might see a tiny bit on a chew toy, but anything more is unusual.

Bring your pet in for an exam if you see blood from the anus, vulva, penis, or in the urine. It usually means an infection, though it may also be due to a tumor in the area. An exam is also a good idea whenever you can't find the source of the bleeding.

## Puncture Wounds

**We need to examine all puncture wounds.** This is especially true of any bite wounds. Cat bites are some of the worst. A cat bite causes a small puncture wound and ends up “injecting” bacteria down into the wound. It’s difficult to clean out completely. The skin closes over on the top but an infection is brewing underneath.



Cooper has a wound on his toe.

To make it worse, often you don’t even know your pet’s been injured until you find a swollen, painful, infected area (an abscess) a couple days later. If you don’t catch it and treat it early, a large area of skin can fall off from the infection. Now you have a big gaping wound instead of just a small bite wound.

**If you see puncture wounds or know your pet has been in a fight with another animal, come in right away.** Antibiotics can help to clear the problem up quickly before it turns into something much worse.

## Wound Care

If a wound is bleeding, stop the bleeding first. Flush the area with warm water using the bulb syringe in your first aid kit. You can trim hair away from the wound if needed. If it looks deeper than just a scratch, flush it with hydrogen peroxide followed by another flush with water. Sometimes, the peroxide will sting so be careful. Don’t scrub a wound as that may start it bleeding again. If there is dirt or debris in the wound that doesn’t flush out, bring your pet in. Apply an antibiotic ointment especially if the wound was dirty.



This is a cut on a back leg, cleaned up and ready for sutures.

We have a Chinese herbal ointment that is wonderful for scrapes, cuts, and burns. It stops pain and speeds up healing. Call us about having some in your pet’s first aid kit.



The 3-6 month onsies work well for cats.

Cover wounds if you need to protect the area from getting dirty, if you don’t want ointment on your furniture, or to prevent your pet from licking the area. You don’t need a heavy bandage. Use a non-stick gauze pad covered with some breathable wrap. Apply a strip or two of medical tape to hold it in place. Duct tape is not a good choice for taping wounds, as it doesn’t breathe. Sometimes, you can get creative with clothing. Toddler socks work well on feet; infant onsies can fit most cats; T-shirts can fit larger dogs. It can fit backward with the tail through the neck opening.

Be careful when bandaging! **It is easy to make a bandage too tight especially on a leg or paw.** It's worse if the wrap material you have is a stretchy type. Wrap loosely and don't stretch the material while wrapping it. Severe damage can occur as a result of too tight bandages (which can even lead to amputation).



**Correct way. This is difficult to do right so ideally leave it to the professionals.**

Ideally, leave leg or foot bandaging to the professionals. If you need to wrap it, start at the toes (completely cover them) and wrap up the leg. Use a soft layer before applying the self-cling bandage wrap. You can put a cotton ball between each toe so they don't press on each other under the bandage.



**Don't do this! The toes are not covered and the tape will cut off blood supply.**



**This bandage is using the front legs to prevent it from slipping.**

For wounds on the chest or abdomen, wrap around the area with bandaging material. **Make sure a bandage that goes around the chest is not too tight.** Otherwise, it can be difficult for your pet to breathe. Bandages over the lower abdomen have a tendency to slip off the rump. It's often best to have us wrap wounds on the abdomen.

Wrap wounds on the head with the ear out (if not injured) or covered up. You can flip the ear backward to lie flat against the skull. Wrap far up on the head to avoid it slipping backward. Don't wrap too tight around the throat (you want to fit at least 2 fingers under the wrap).



**Most pets will try to shake this bandage off.**

**Check a bandage at least once a day.** Remove it to make sure the area does not look infected and rewrap the area if needed. Pets will often try to bite at the bandage when it is too tight because it's uncomfortable or painful.

**It's important to keep bandages clean and dry.** Cover a bandage on a leg or paw with plastic when your pet goes outside. You can use a plastic bag or clingy plastic wrap. Remove it when your pet comes back inside. The plastic won't allow air to get through the bandage. If a bandage gets wet, remove it and replace it with a new one. Moisture under a bandage will cause problems.



## No Licking

It's important to prevent your pet from licking a wound, sore, or bandage. This is a natural instinct for them, but **wounds heal slower if your pet is licking them**. There is also a chance of infection. If your pet wants to lick, you will need to bandage it, cover it up, or put an Elizabethan collar (E collar) on your pet - the dreaded cone of shame!

### Proper fit of an E collar



Pull on the collar to make sure it doesn't slip off the head.



Push back on the collar to make sure the nose doesn't stick out.



Two fingers under the collar is the correct fit.

If your pet starts to lick or bite at a bandage that wasn't bothering him before, **check the bandage immediately**. It's irritating him and may be too tight or the area may be infected.

You can also try applying a bitter-tasting product to the wrap. These may or may not work for your pet. You can buy Bitter Apple Spray, or you can try Tabasco sauce or vinegar at home. You can mix either one in a small amount of petroleum jelly so it's not so watery. Remember, you want it to taste bad so don't cover up the taste by the jelly.

## Infection

Look for signs of infection around any wound. **Signs of infection include redness and swelling**. There may be drainage that looks like pus or is thicker than water. Often your pet will be licking the area, as it's usually painful or uncomfortable. If you see signs of infection or aren't sure, bring your pet to us since antibiotics are likely needed.



Licked wounds quickly become infected. Notice the red puffy appearance.

## Cut or Torn Toenails

Either you cut the nail too short, or a long nail catches on something and tears. **Sometimes it will bleed a lot.** If you've cut the nail too short, apply pressure to the end of the nail for several minutes. Use styptic powder or a thick paste of flour and water on the nail end. These methods will usually stop the bleeding.

Wrapping the paw can also help to apply pressure to it. Follow the previous precautions for applying a bandage. When you don't wrap the paw, prevent your dog from walking on it for 30-60 min. It may start bleeding again from the nail scratching on the ground. If it recurs, rewrap the paw.

**If the nail is torn, your dog may need an exam.** This rarely happens to cats. Sometimes the nail hasn't completely torn off and we need to remove it. Otherwise, it's painful every time the nail touches something. At other times, the outer hard part of the nail pulled off, leaving the soft inner part exposed. **This is very painful.** We need to cut the nail back above the torn area. Do not try it at home! It will be painful and your dog will usually try to bite.



The hard part of the nail (oval) has been tore back and exposed the pink, fleshy area (arrow). This is the painful part.

## Fish Hooks

Dogs will get into anything! An inquisitive pooch will check out your tackle box or a hook hanging on a line. Cats can also be attracted to the fishy scent and flashy lures.

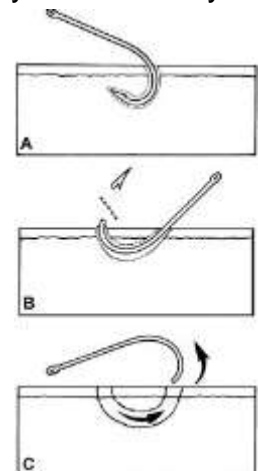


Notice the hook hanging from the dog's lower lip.

They often get a hook in their mouth, but it could be in a paw or elsewhere. If it's in the tongue, it may bleed a lot. Bring your pet in for us to remove the hook and clean up the wound.

However, you may need to remove the hook yourself. **The first and most important thing is to protect yourself!** Your pet may be in pain and initially will be panicky. Place a muzzle on your pet so you can safely remove the hook. If the hook is in the mouth a homemade muzzle might work better.

If the barbed end is still in tissue, there are 2 ways to remove it. One is to push it through the skin, cut off the barbed tip with wire cutters, and then pull the rest of it out backwards. This is where those needle-nose pliers in your first aid kit will come in handy.

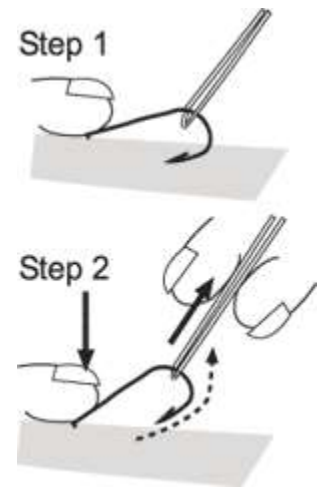


The other is to loop some string around the curved part of the hook, press down on the eye end, and pull on the string. The hook will back out the way it went in. Be sure to pull on the curve.

After you remove the hook, bring your pet in. Hooks are usually very dirty, and antibiotics are usually needed to prevent infection.

## Splinters

You can remove small splinters with a tweezers or hemostat. After removal, wash the area with soap and water. Keep an eye on it for a few days for signs of infection.



## SKIN PROBLEMS

Besides cuts and wounds, the most common skin problem in pets is itchy skin. Most of the time, this is not an emergency. Itchy skin often occurs due to skin infections, parasites (such as fleas or mites), and overall allergies.



An allergic reaction caused the intense redness on this dog.

**Allergies** are frequent causes of itchy skin and the scratching can lead to infections. The infections increase itchiness. Allergies can be due to things your pet inhales, things absorbed through their skin, food, and drugs.

Your pet may be scratching because of parasites. Fleas are most common (and it's usually due to an allergic reaction to the fleabites) but it can also be mites such as scabies (sarcoptic mange).

In some cases, there isn't a medical problem but it's behavioral or due to stress. These pets are often licking excessively rather than scratching. The only sign may be hair loss or thinning hair.

**Other conditions can cause skin problems without itchiness.** You may see hair loss, redness, scaling, thickening, or other signs. Hormone problems, autoimmune problems, ringworm (a fungal infection) and cancer can be causes.

## When It's An Emergency

Hives, intense itching, intense redness, and swollen face are signs of an allergic reaction. These need to be seen by a vet immediately as they could develop into anaphylaxis and cause breathing problems. We will give a steroid injection and a Benadryl® injection to help bring down the inflammation quickly.



Swelling of the face can be the muzzle or the eyes.

If you notice signs of an allergic reaction at home, you can give Benadryl® (diphenhydramine) to help decrease the reaction. It's available in 25 mg tablets or a children's liquid (12.5 mg per 5 ml). The dose for cats and dogs is 1 mg per pound by mouth every 4 hours (while the reaction is occurring). **Know your pet's weight in case you need to give medication.** Make yourself a cheat sheet with the dose already calculated and keep it in your first aid kit.



Hives are easier to see on short-haired pets.

## Ticks

Ticks are nasty, ugly creatures. Besides being so creepy, **ticks can be deadly**. They feed on blood and carry plenty of serious diseases. For many conditions, ticks need to be attached for 24-48 hours before they will transmit an infection to your pet, though this time is shortening for some diseases. However, this may give you time to remove the ticks before anything serious develops.

Ticks can also cause something called tick paralysis. As the name implies, it causes you or your pet to become paralyzed. This is due to a toxin from the tick rather than from an infection. Fortunately, once you remove the ticks, the paralysis clears up.



Ticks can look like skin tags.

Despite what many people think, **ticks do not burrow their heads into your pet's skin**. It only has its mouthparts biting and holding on. When removing a tick part of the mouth may stay in the skin, but this rarely causes any problems. Just do your best to remove it completely.



## Dos and Don'ts of Tick Removal

There are plenty of myths and misunderstandings surrounding ticks. Many people were taught to remove ticks by burning them off. Do not do this! This doesn't work and you may accidentally burn your pet. Covering ticks with petroleum jelly, nail polish, liquid soap, alcohol, or other products is another folk remedy. It doesn't work and it leaves the tick on for too long.

**The only effective way to minimize the possibility of disease is to pull the tick off.** It's best to wear gloves when you remove a tick. **It's important to remove the tick intact** and avoid squeezing the tick's body.



Grab the tick as close to the skin as you can and pull steadily.

Use tweezers, a hemostat, or a tick removal tool. Grab the tick at its head next to the skin and with a steady pressure pull up. Do not twist or jerk the tick as you may end up pulling the tick apart.

Put the tick into a container with alcohol to kill it. You may remove a small patch of skin along with the tick. This is normal. It won't be a problem, and it tells you you've been successful. Clean the area of the bite and wash your hands.

**Keep the tick and make a note of the date you removed it.** If your pet shows signs of a possible tick-borne disease, your vet may want to identify the tick or test it. Some signs could include lameness, swollen joints, becoming listless, not wanting to move, fever, or loss of appetite. If anything unusual develops, let your vet know that you removed a tick from your pet and when.

## Bees and Mosquitos

The most serious complication of bee stings is usually an allergic reaction. Fortunately, this isn't common. Often you won't know your pet has been stung. **If you notice swelling, itchiness, or redness, give your pet Benadryl® (diphenhydramine) for a possible allergic reaction.** Ideally you would give Benadryl® (diphenhydramine) right after the sting (before you see signs) to avoid a reaction. Your pet may also be pawing at his mouth since pets like to snap at bees. If you see your pet get bitten, examine the area for a stinger. If you see one, scrap it off. Most of the time, you won't find one so don't worry about it.



This cat was stung on the nose.



**Mosquito bites can mimic other problems. Let us know if it doesn't improve.**

**Cats can have allergic reactions to mosquito bites.** There will be small bumps that develop into crusty areas. The bridge of the nose is frequently affected. It can also show up on the earflaps or the pads of the feet. You need to keep your cat indoors or use a cat-safe mosquito repellent to prevent further outbreaks.

## **Bathing Your Pet**

If your pet is having an allergic reaction to something on his skin, bathing will help to remove it. You can use regular shampoo in most cases. Make sure to rinse well. Using an aloe & oatmeal based shampoo will help reduce itchiness and soothe the skin.



**This cat is having a reaction to her flea medicine.**

Any medicine placed on the skin can cause an allergic reaction. Flea medications are one of the most common things we put on their skin and usually only causes irritation at the site of application. However, some medicine, such as permethrin or pyrethrin based flea treatments, can cause tremors and seizures, especially in cats. These types of medicines are found in less expensive, over the counter flea medicines. Make sure to read labels and avoid these.

If your pet is having an allergic reaction to flea medicine, you will need to use a detergent such as Dawn dish soap. This is because flea medicine is distributed into the oil glands in the skin. You need the detergent to remove the skin oil. Use only a small amount in the area that was treated. Dish soap can make your pet sick if you use too much.

## LAMENESS – TRAUMA – PAIN

### Limping

Your pet's been outside having fun but then he's favoring a leg. Often, it's just a slight twist or bruise. **However, if your pet won't use the leg at all, is excessively tired, or seems to be in pain, your pet needs an exam.**

An abscess (due to an infection), a bruise, a fracture, or torn ligament may be the reason for the limping. Sometimes, the problem is in the neck or back and is not in the leg. An exam by us will help to determine what the cause is. We can also prescribe pain medication to make your pet more comfortable.



It's not always this easy to tell your pup is limping.

### Checking the Leg

You may be tempted to check the leg when your pet is limping, but be cautious. **If your pet is in pain or the leg looks odd don't touch it unless he's muzzled!** A painful pet will often bite. He won't mean to hurt you, but he will bite out of reflex. Feeling and moving the leg may also make it hurt so you need to be careful. **Take precautions to keep yourself safe.** This is a good time to use that muzzle in your first aid kit! Know how to put it on before you need to use it. If your pet is struggling, though, it is better to bring him in for an exam. A struggling pet could make an injury worse and it adds to the stress of the situation.



Cats have needle-sharp claws to avoid besides their teeth. **Wrapping your cat in a towel will cover up the feet.** You can pull out the leg you want to check and leave the others wrapped up. Use a muzzle along with the towel.

**When you touch the leg, do it gently.** Check for a lump, any swelling, or areas that feel warm or cool compared to other parts of the leg. See if the leg moves normally. If you notice anything, bring your pet in for an exam. Any of those signs can mean it's something more than just a simple bruise or strain. The good news is that if you can feel and move the leg without causing any pain, it is usually not a serious problem.



It's easier to move your dog's leg if he's lying on his side.

We can't emphasize enough how important it is to be careful you don't get bitten or scratched. **Injuries to people, especially on the hands, can be very serious.** It's much better to have professionals check him out than risk injury to yourself or others.

## Broken Bones

A leg or toe positioned at an odd angle is probably broken. The same is true for an area that is badly swollen or very painful. You can put a temporary splint on a leg to make it more comfortable for transportation to the clinic.



Wrap towels thickly around the leg as a temporary splint.

**You MUST muzzle your pet to do this.** Always be careful to avoid injury to people.

Wrap towels around the leg until it's bulky and your pet can't bend it. Wrap it above and below joints on either side of the suspected break. E.g. on the front leg, wrap above the elbow and below the wrist if the problem is in the foreleg. If it's higher up, wrap below the elbow, up the leg, and around the body to try to prevent the shoulder from moving. Tape the ends to hold it in place. Do not try to pull the leg – just wrap it as it is.

Make sure to keep the muzzle on when you are moving your pet into the car and into the vet clinic as these are going to be the most painful times.

## Home Treatment

If your pet is acting normal besides a slight limp, eating well, and not in pain, have him rest the leg at home. That means no running or jumping. Take him outside only on a leash. In the house, lift him up and down furniture. Try to limit racing in the house. This can be difficult with cats but do the best you can. Contain your cat to one room to avoid the nighttime races.



**Your pet will generally need to rest the leg for about a week.** It will usually get better gradually.

If at any time the limp gets worse, or if it's not better after a few days of rest, bring him in for a checkup.

## Pain Medicine

**Most human pain medicines are poisonous to dogs and cats.** They don't break down the drugs the way humans do. This means the drug builds up in their body and they are much more likely to have side effects and reactions. Some human drugs, even in small doses, are deadly to our pets.

Dogs will tolerate aspirin but it's not a completely safe drug. It has the potential for serious side effects in dogs. It can also prevent the doctor from using a better medicine. Because of this, we advise that you do NOT give aspirin at home.



Call us before giving any medications to your pets. **There are NO safe human pain medicines for cats.**

## Accidents

**The most common accidents pets have are fights with other animals and being hit by a car.** As mentioned under wound care, animal bites can be very serious and pets should come in for an exam soon. They always need antibiotics after a bite wound and the sooner they start it, the better.

Some pets can have internal injuries after an animal encounter. If the other animal is much bigger, it can pick your pet up and shake him like a doll, leading to all kinds of injuries. This is little-dog big-dog syndrome as we usually see it in dogs. Sadly, big dogs are more likely to kill cats.



Shock will often hide problems.

Car encounters can range from no injuries to death. Many different injuries are possible depending on your pet's size and the type of trauma. Some of these injuries are not noticeable right away. This is especially true for lung injuries. **Every pet that is hit by a car should be examined and have its chest x-rayed.**

Bruises of the lungs are common and early treatment is always best.

## Painful Conditions

**Any pet that seems painful for no apparent reason needs an exam.** Some pets (usually dogs) will develop a slipped disc in their back. It comes on suddenly after jumping or another movement. It can be very painful or even cause paralysis (where they can't move one or more legs).



This dog's back legs are paralyzed due to a slipped disc.

A dog can also slip a disc in his neck. When this happens, he won't want to move and will refuse to lift his head up. He may even yelp if he moves his head.



This looks like he wants to play but he is actually very painful.

Pets with abdominal pain need an exam quickly. They may take up a “praying position” where their front legs are on the ground and their butt is in the air. Abdominal pain can be a sign of a serious problem. It can be due to pancreatitis (a life threatening inflammation of the pancreas) as well as other problems such as stomach pain and kidney stones.

## HEART and RESPIRATORY PROBLEMS

### Heart

Heart problems often appear with difficulty breathing or coughing. Your pet may also be weak, slow down quickly, or have fainting spells. Your pet may pant heavily or for a longer time when there doesn't seem to be a good reason for it. Cats rarely pant unless they are very nervous. **Panting is often a sign of heart disease in cats.** Any of these signs mean a visit to the vet.



Cats are not supposed to pant like dogs.

Pets don't have heart attacks as people do because they don't get hardening of the arteries. Fortunately, because of this, they don't often go into cardiorespiratory arrest. Unfortunately, when they do go into arrest, the outcome is not favorable since it's usually the result of serious problems.

### CPR

You can do CPR on your pet if needed. First, be sure the pet is not breathing and doesn't have a pulse. Look at the Normals section on page 7 for tips on how to feel the pulse. **Be sure you know how to find the pulse before you need it!** We can help you find it on your pet if you need help. Watch his chest to see if he's breathing.

The process for performing CPR is similar to doing it on humans, but your pet will need to be lying on his right side. Push down one-third to one-half of the chest width, with your elbows locked, and perform 100-120 chest compressions per minute. If doing mouth-to-snout breathing, give two breaths for every 30 compressions. Perform CPR in 2-minute cycles, switching the person performing the compressions with each cycle. When done correctly, this is physically exhausting.



## Breathing Problems



A cat that is having problems breathing will sit upright with the neck stretched and mouth open.

Pets can develop breathing problems for a variety of reasons and all of them will require an exam. Your pet may wheeze, gasp, and stretch his neck out to breathe, or breathe with his mouth open. He may also be panting. All of these can indicate he's not getting enough air. His tongue and mouth may turn blue. If you see this, your pet needs to be seen immediately.

## GI (GASTROINTESTINAL) PROBLEMS

### Vomiting and Diarrhea

There are many causes of both vomiting and diarrhea. Some are mild and can be treated at home, while others can be very serious and even life threatening. **How sick your pet is can give you a clue as to how serious it is.**

Pets that are very lethargic (tired), won't eat or drink, don't want to move around, or look sick should be examined. If they vomit several times within a few hours, have diarrhea that is watery or explosive, or have both vomiting and diarrhea come in soon. **These situations can cause dehydration quickly** which makes your pet feel worse and complicates everything.

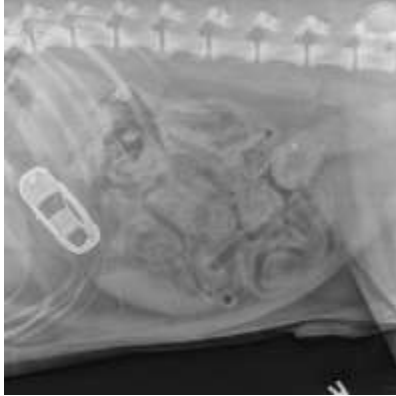
To check for dehydration, lift up some of your pet's skin between the shoulder blades to form a tent. When you let go, it should snap back into position quickly. If it is slow, it means your pet is dehydrated. There is severe dehydration if the tent stays up. Test your pet at home to see what is normal for him.



Checking for dehydration.

## Other Causes of Vomiting and Diarrhea

Another reason to come in quickly is if you know (or suspect) your pet has swallowed something that might become stuck. We want to catch it soon before it creates serious problems. **Surgery is much easier on your pet if the object is in the stomach and hasn't moved into the intestines yet.**



Can you see the Matchbox car?

**Most of the time you don't know what is causing your pet to be sick.** If your pet has eaten a new or different food, that may be the cause and does not usually develop into anything serious. Other possible causes that may or may not be serious are infections, parasites, poisons, stomach or intestinal problems, diseases of the liver, kidney or pancreas, cancer, food allergies, drug reactions, hairballs, or even stress.

## Home Treatment for Vomiting and Diarrhea

If your pet isn't acting sick, you can try treating him at home. However, **if he gets worse or is not better within a day or two, call us.** Some problems can get very serious very fast. Another reason for a checkup is if signs return after he improves.

Treatment at home starts with a 24 hour fast (12 hours for small or young pets). Don't give your pet anything to eat. Offer him very small amounts of water frequently. **Don't give ice cubes as dogs often chew them breaking their teeth.** If your pet vomits the water or diarrhea persists during this time, you should bring him in for an exam.



If vomiting or diarrhea has stopped during the 24 hours, you can start to feed him again. **Feed a bland diet**, either a prescription one from us, or one consisting of  $\frac{3}{4}$  white rice plus  $\frac{1}{4}$  cottage cheese, boiled hamburger, or chicken. Start with  $\frac{1}{4}$  of his usual amount and feed small amounts frequently.

Gradually increase the amount at each feeding and decrease the number of feedings. Slowly add his regular diet to the bland one. Do this over 4-5 days. If he vomits or has diarrhea again, it means a trip to the vet. If he's not interested in eating, he needs an exam.



Bring him in if he isn't eating.



In some cases of diarrhea, as the problem improves your pet may not have a bowel movement for a day or even two. This is not a cause for concern as long as he is not trying to defecate. If he's trying but nothing is coming out, that's another problem. **Some pets will strain when their colon is irritated** or he may be constipated.

We have herbs and supplements that can help your pet recover. Generally, it's best to **avoid human medicines for treating your pets**. If the problem is mild, it should resolve without medication.

## Cats and Hairballs

Most cats that vomit up hairballs don't need any kind of treatment. Once the hairball is up, they are back to normal. Hairballs are usually tubular in shape, full of hair, and cats have a tendency to do it where we'll step on them in our bare feet!



Hairballs are usually tubular.

You can give your cat commercial hairball remedies or foods designed to reduce hairballs. You can also give bromelain, an enzyme that comes from pineapples that digests protein. Sprinkle a little on your cat's food every day. Frequent brushing will keep down the amount of hair they swallow. **Cats that have more than one or two hairballs a year may have an intestinal problem that could become serious.**

## Air Swallowing

If your pet (usually a dog) gulps his food down quickly, he may swallow air with his food. This can overload his stomach and the food comes right back up. You can easily solve this problem by making him slow down when he eats. You can put a large rock or something in his bowl to make him eat around it (make sure he can't eat it!) or use a **bowl especially designed for this problem.**



Pet stores have "puzzle" bowls of various shapes and sizes.

## Motion Sickness

Some pets are prone to motion sickness just as we are. Often youngsters will outgrow it and the problem goes away on its own. Most pets will drool or lick their lips (signs of nausea). They often act anxious and may vomit or have diarrhea. We have a great herbal remedy to control motion sickness. You can also give Benadryl® (diphenhydramine). It's available in 25 mg tablets or a children's liquid (12.5 mg per 5 ml). The dose for cats and dogs is 1 mg per pound by mouth given 1 hour before travel.



## Constipation

Constipation is usually a minor problem unless it has become a chronic issue. Changes in food or eating the wrong thing (especially bones), drinking less water, and other things can cause constipation.

The most obvious sign is seeing your pet squatting as if to defecate and straining. He may pass small amounts of hard, dry stool. If the constipation has been going on for several days, your pet may start to vomit and won't be interested in eating.



Your pup will assume the position often but produce little to no feces.

**Caution: If your cat is a male straining in the litter box, bring**



Often a blocked cat will be yowling in pain too.

**him in ASAP.** He may have a urinary blockage instead of being constipated. This is a life-threatening emergency and you want to have him examined immediately.

Some pets that have diarrhea will be straining because of irritation in the colon. Be sure to look at his stool to decide which problem is going on.

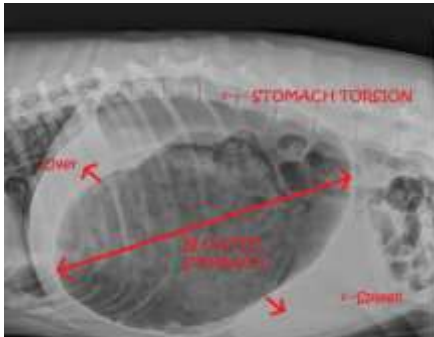
**Help your pet by adding water to his food and increasing fiber.** This will often take care of mild problems. Start with a small amount of fiber added to your pet's food and increase it until the stools are soft enough for your pet to pass easily. Fiber works by drawing more water into the stool and making it softer and easier to pass. You can use psyllium (Metamucil®) or canned pumpkin ( $\frac{1}{2}$  to 4 teaspoons per meal). For cats or small dogs, start with  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. You can also use a prescription high-fiber diet from us. Be sure your pet has plenty of water and is drinking if you add fiber.



If these measures don't help, bring him in for a checkup. We can give him an enema to resolve the problem or some medicine to help him feel better.

## Bloating

**Bloating is not normal and is often the sign of a serious problem.** Some large breed dogs develop a problem where the stomach bloats from gas building up and often leads to the stomach twisting (called GDV). This is a life-threatening emergency and you need to bring him to the ER immediately. These dogs usually look bloated and are often retching but nothing comes up except foam. **If the stomach has twisted, the dog needs emergency surgery to survive.**



Here's an x-ray of a dog with a bloated and twisted stomach.

**Other pets can have a bloated look if the abdomen is full of fluid.** This can happen with some heart problems, liver failure, certain infections, and cancer. A bloated pet always needs an exam.



This cat has fluid in the belly due to a disease called FIP.

## Abdominal Pain

Pets that are painful in their abdomen often take on a very characteristic pose. It's called the "praying position". They stretch their front legs forward and stick their butt up in the air. They also may have a hunched back.



Praying position

**Any pet that seems painful in the abdomen needs an exam quickly.** Often it's due to a serious and even life-threatening condition.

## Diabetics

You need to have corn syrup (Karo syrup) in your first aid kit if your pet is diabetic. If your pet gets too much insulin or vomits after insulin has been given, his blood sugar can drop too low. If this happens, you need to rub corn syrup on his gums as soon as you notice the problem. Since corn syrup is liquid sugar, this will help to keep his blood sugar levels normal.



# NEUROLOGICAL PROBLEMS

## Seizures

Seizures can be incredibly scary to watch and the first time it happens you want to panic. **Take a deep breath.** You don't need to do anything for your pet while he's



having a seizure – he won't swallow his tongue. Keep him safe from bumping into things or falling down stairs. Start timing the seizure (counting the seconds can help keep you calm). It's helpful to know how long it lasted. **If the seizure doesn't stop after three minutes,** then scoop him up and take him to the nearest emergency facility. It is also an emergency if your pet has another seizure right after one or has three within 24 hours.

The most common signs of a seizure include stiffening or falling over, paddling of legs, and trembling. They may appear as if they are choking on something. Some pets may also have uncontrollable urination or defecation. He may even drool a lot. If you come home to find a mess in your house, it's possible your pet had a seizure while you were gone.



Your pet can also have more mild signs such as staring off into space, chomping the mouth (like chewing gum), or snapping in the air at what appears to be imaginary flies (called "fly biting"). Cats rarely have the mild forms.

**If possible, record the seizure to show the vet.**



**Seizures are exhausting.**

**After a seizure, your pet may be sleepy or seem confused.** This will usually clear up within a day. Prior to a seizure starting your pet may appear anxious or has dilated pupils. This is usually the pet sensing a seizure is coming.

If this is the first time, your pet has had a seizure, call us. We will want to examine your pet and run some tests. **Dogs can get epilepsy while that is rare in cats.** Epilepsy is abnormal activity in the brain but it's not due to any known cause. In other words, the brain looks normal but acts abnormal. Epilepsy often starts in younger dogs under 5 years of age. If it's not epilepsy, or when seizures start later in life, there is an underlying cause for the seizures and it helps to find out what that is.

## Paralysis



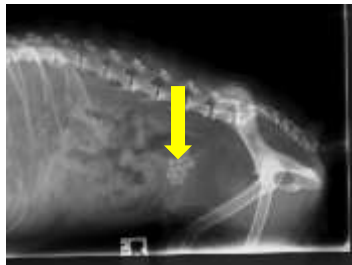
A cat will just drag their legs if paralyzed.

A sudden paralysis of one or more legs is an emergency. It's important to find out what the cause is so we can treat your pet properly. Some pets will be uncoordinated before paralysis starts. If you notice your pet being unsteady on his legs, bring him in for an exam. Don't wait to see if it gets better as it often gets worse.

A pet with sudden paralysis will often cry out in pain. Some causes of the paralysis may only be painful at the time of injury (such as a slipped disc) while other causes can be very painful (such as a blood clot). If your pet seems painful, remember to muzzle before moving him.

## URINARY PROBLEMS

Pets that urinate more frequently, urinate larger amounts than normal, or have accidents in the house often have a urinary tract infection. Blood in the urine may also



Bladder stones can cause an emergency if they block urination.

be due to an infection. Kidney disease, bladder stones, diabetes, and cancer are other possible causes for these problems. **All of them need a trip to the vet to discover the cause and treat it properly.** Most are not emergencies.

To figure out what is going on, we will need to test a urine sample as well so bring one with you or prevent your pet from urinating before the appointment.

### Urinary Obstruction

If you notice **your pet trying to urinate but nothing happens or only a few dribbles** come out that **could be an emergency**. Your pet may have an obstruction blocking the passage of the urine out of the body. **This is life threatening so don't wait!**



Cats will often yowl in pain as they try to urinate but cannot.

Cats and female dogs may appear constipated as they squat and keep trying to urinate. Make sure your pet is able to urinate. If you are not sure, bring them in immediately.

## EYE and EAR PROBLEMS

### Eyes

A bulging eye or one that has popped out is definitely an emergency and needs immediate attention. The most common cause is trauma such as being hit by a car. Fortunately, you won't see many of these. **If your pet is squinting or holding an eye closed, that indicates pain** and another reason to come in quickly for an exam.



Short-nosed dogs are more prone to having their eyes pop out.

More commonly, pets will have red eyes with a watery or mucous-like discharge, and may be rubbing the eye. If it's infected, we need to exam it in order to prescribe medicine. Some pets with allergies will have itchy, watery eyes.



Squinting means pain.

If your pet has gotten dirt or something small into his eye, you can flush it with sterile saline or eyewash. He will need an exam if flushing doesn't remove the object or if he squints the eye. He may have a scratch on the eye if he's squinting because scratches hurt a lot. Scratches can be small and just on the surface or they can be serious and deep. If the eye itself is leaking a clear fluid, this is an

emergency and you need to go to the U of I emergency right away.

### Ears

**Infections are the most common problem in ears.** Pets will usually have a red, smelly, dirty looking ear. They are usually scratching at the ear or shaking their head because it itches. It may also be painful to the touch or they may cry out when scratching. We need to examine these pets to determine the cause of the infection in order to treat it correctly. **Ear mites are possible but not very common.** They will cause an intense itchiness in the ears. Ear medicines in pet stores usually treat mites, but they are often ineffective because that's not the problem. Have us exam your pet first to find out the cause. Some pets will have allergies and their ears are itchy but not infected yet. Medicine can help to keep them more comfortable.





The large swelling of the ear is the hematoma.

**If pets shake their heads hard enough, they can break some blood vessels in the earflap.** Blood forms under the skin on the flap causing a soft bump called a hematoma. The pressure from it can be uncomfortable so it is best to treat it. It may require minor surgery. We also have to treat the underlying infection to prevent it from happening again.

**Any cuts on the ear will bleed heavily.** Wrap the ear up to control the bleeding. If it continues to bleed, bring your pet in. If an animal bite caused the cut, your pet will need antibiotics so an exam is necessary. If the ear is torn, it may need sutures. Otherwise, you can watch it at home for signs of infection. Never use cotton swabs (Q-tips®) to clean ears. You will push debris further down into the ear canal making the problem worse.



You can wrap the ear flat to the head.

## POISONS

**There are hundreds of things poisonous to our pets.**



There are a variety of locks available.

The challenge is to keep them away from as much as possible. It's just like having toddlers in the house! Pet proofing our homes is a must. That means you keep everything in drawers and cabinets. If you have a pet that can open doors, use toddler locks! Always remember how creative our pets can be to reach things.

### **Medications**

**The most common cause of poisoning in pets is medications,** both human and veterinary. Dogs are more likely to have problems with this. They find a bottle and chew it up or you drop some pills on the floor, and they wolf them down. Be cautious with all medications. Don't assume that because it's in a tube your dog won't chew it! **Keep all containers tightly closed and stored in a cabinet or drawer.**



Bottles are no match for a determined dog.



**Ibuprofen is toxic to cats and dogs.**

Well-intentioned people may accidentally poison pets by giving them human medicine. Pain medicine is the most common category. Most human drugs for pain are poisonous to pets, especially cats. **Never, ever, give medicine to your pet without checking with us first.** Even though it's safe for us doesn't mean it's safe for them!

Aspirin is a common problem. Although pets can handle this medicine at the right dose, it can be toxic. Also, it prevents the doctor from using better medicine later on. We do NOT advise giving aspirin.

## Plants

The list of poisonous plants is long! **There are over 700 plants known to poison dogs and cats.** Even a few nibbles of the wrong one can be very serious. Cats, more than dogs, like to chew on plants. This makes them more susceptible to poisoning by them. **Lilies are especially deadly to cats** but many others are as well.



**Daffodils (toxic)**

Always check any plant you plan to bring into the home to make sure it's safe. Some common plants are known by different names so you must be sure you know what the plant is. It's best to look at the scientific name if possible. **If you aren't sure, don't bring it in!** Be cautious with bulbs and outdoor plants as well.



**Stargazer lilies (toxic)**

If your pet has eaten a plant, check the ASPCA's Poisonous Plant List to see if it's toxic or not. If you are still not sure, call the ASPCA Poison Control Center at (888) 426-4435 or the Pet Poison Helpline at (800) 213-6680. Both will have a fee but they can tell you if you need to go to the ER or not (and if you need to go to the ER, they will likely call a poison helpline anyway).



## Foods

There are a few foods that people can eat but will poison your pet. Dogs have more problems in this category. **Xylitol (an artificial sweetener), grapes, raisins, and macadamia nuts are all toxic to dogs** but cats don't have problems. **Both cats and dogs can get sick from onion, garlic, yeast bread dough, alcohol, caffeine, and chocolate.**

Chocolate is the best-known food for causing problems in pets. The type, amount, and your pet's weight will determine whether it's serious or not. The darker the chocolate and the more real cocoa that's in it, the more dangerous it can be.

White chocolate is not poisonous. **Call us if your pet has eaten chocolate.** We will need to know the type of chocolate and how much was eaten.

Common foods toxic to dogs



It only takes a small amount of antifreeze to be deadly.

Most people realize that chemicals are potentially poisonous. They can harm people as well as pets. **Antifreeze is especially deadly** so be careful to clean up any spills. It has a sweet taste that both cats and dogs will readily lick up if they can. Most yard and auto products can cause problems so keep your pets away from them.

**Some insecticides are poisonous to cats though they are safe for dogs.** Read labels carefully before treating your pet for fleas or ticks. If you treat your home for insects, be sure to keep your pets safe.

Products to kill rodents, slugs, and snails can all have deadly consequences for your pet.

Place all of these in areas your pet can't reach. Remember that some pets can get into incredibly small spaces and their paws can extend farther than you think! **Your pet can also be poisoned by eating a mouse killed by poison.** So keeping the poison out of paw's reach might not be enough. You are better off using mousetraps instead.



Pets can eat the poisoned mouse

## Others

**There are too many potential poisons to list every one of them.** However, remember that batteries are poisonous and the lithium batteries are the worst. They are the flat small ones found in phones, watches, etc. They can be very corrosive to tissues. Do NOT make them throw up if they ate a battery as it can burn holes in the throat on the way up.



Flush the mouth with water after your pet chews a glow stick.

Glow sticks and jewelry are not poisonous but have a very bitter taste. Any pet biting into one will drool excessively. Using a turkey baster or bulb syringe from your first aid kit, you can try to flush his mouth out with water. Just squirt some in without lifting up his head. Drinking some milk or broth or eating some wet food will help to remove the taste more quickly.

## At-Home Treatment

If your pet has encountered poison, there are things you can do at home. The **first thing is remove your pet from the source of the poison.** Remove him from any vomit so he doesn't eat it again. **Then call a poison control center or us.** It's critical to find out if it's safe to treat your pet at home and, if so, what you need to do.

If it's something on his fur and skin, bathing is best. In this case, if you don't have a pet shampoo on hand use a human one. Don't use dishwashing detergent as that can also make him sick. Lather him well, rinse him off, and repeat it.

If your dog has eaten something that could poison him, you may be able to make him vomit at home. **Call first** to make sure it's safe to cause him to vomit. If it is, then you can give him 3% hydrogen peroxide. **This is only for dogs.** Cats will need to come to the clinic, as we need to give them an injectable drug.



Sometimes vomiting a poison can make things worse. Always call first!

Give 1 Tbsp. of hydrogen peroxide for every 15 pounds your dog weighs; 1 tsp. for every 5 pounds. Give a maximum of 3 Tbsp. no matter how big your dog is. That means if he weighs more than 45 pounds you only give 3 Tbsp. Many dogs will lap the peroxide from a bowl. You can also use a bulb syringe or turkey baster to give it. Be careful that he swallows it, and you don't get it in his windpipe (don't tip his head up). If he doesn't vomit within 5-10 minutes, you can repeat it. **Only repeat it once.** If he still hasn't vomited, you need to bring him in. This can be messy at home so bring him in right away if you want us to treat him.

**Save the packages** for any chemicals, drugs, or products you use around the house and yard. If your pet is exposed to something, we need to know the exact name and ingredients of what it was, along with how much your pet ate. If you have partial packages or only a few pills (but no container), bring those too! The Poison Control centers have a database to ID toxins with minimal information.



Medicine has ID on each pill or capsule.

**Remember: the best treatment is prevention!**

### Poison Control Center

Have the phone number of a poison control center in your phone and in your first aid kit. There are two in the country: Pet Poison Helpline and ASPCA. Both charge a fee but the Pet Poison Helpline is usually less expensive. They both have websites that will give you more information on different poisons.



## WEATHER HAZARDS

Hot and cold weather both have their own set of hazards for your pets. Taking precautions ahead of time will help avoid most of them. For those other times, know what to do.

### Hot Weather

During hot weather, the **primary risk is heat stroke**. Our pets overheat easier than we do. They don't have good mechanisms for cooling off. They have sweat glands in their pads but that provides limited cooling. Panting is the way they cool down. They also lose moisture during this process. When they get too hot, they can't pant enough to cool themselves down fast enough. That's when their body temperature can soar, and they are in trouble.



Short-faced dogs are more susceptible to heat stroke.

Keeping pets out of hot cars will help avoid many problems. The other precaution is to allow them to take it easy during the heat of the day. Exercise your pets when it's cooler out. Dogs tend to get into more trouble than cats do. Cats will usually just stop moving when it's too hot. **Dogs, on the other hand, will often keep playing long after they should stop.** It's up to us to make them take it easy.

**If your pet is panting heavily, having trouble breathing, has a seizure, can't walk straight, or collapses come to us immediately.** The situation has now become life threatening and fast treatment is necessary.

If symptoms are milder, you can wet him down at home with cool water (not cold). Start with his head to cool down his brain. If he has a heavy coat, soak him to the skin. If you use a hose outside, be sure to let the water run out until it cools off. Water from a hose that's been in the sun can be hot enough to burn your pet.



Use cool water, not cold water.

Put him into a shaded area or inside where it's cooler. Let him dry naturally; don't towel-dry him. If his panting doesn't slow down within a short time, bring him to the clinic immediately. A high body temperature can cause some serious complications so you don't want to wait too long to get help.

Make sure your pet always has plenty of water available at all times. **Dehydration is a concern from excessive panting** if he doesn't have enough water. That creates its own set of problems.



The pad skin may fall off later since burns can be misleading.

**Hot asphalt can burn pads** so be careful where you walk your dog. Avoid anywhere you wouldn't walk barefoot. Put booties on to avoid the burn. If your pet does burn his feet, come in and get a healing balm from us that works great for burns.

Take precautions around bodies of water. If you go boating with your dog, have him wear a doggy life vest. Not all dogs will make it back to shore. When you are at the ocean, don't let him drink the salt water. If you have a swimming pool, have an alarm that goes off if something falls in. Limit your pet's time in the water because a dog can drink too much water (even fresh water) and cause life-threatening electrolyte imbalances.



Life vests are a must!

Sunscreen isn't just for humans! **Light colored pets, especially those with pink noses, are at risk of sunburn as well as skin cancer.** If your pet is spending time outdoors, protect the thin coated, non-pigmented areas. Use a pet sunscreen and make sure it's safe for cats.

## Cold Weather

**Frostbite is the worry** during cold weather. Cats, especially, are at risk. The ear tips are the most common area, but the tail, nose and toes are all susceptible. Every veterinarian has seen a cat with the tips of one or both of his ears missing. They have been lost to frostbite. If your dog stays outside during the winter, make sure he has a doghouse that will protect him.



If part of your pet's body is very cold or has a color change, use a warm moist towel to warm it up. Don't use hot water and don't rub it. If the area turns dark, the tissue may be dying and you'll need to bring him in for an exam.



**Both ears have been damaged by frostbite.**

**Snow, ice and salt can irritate** pads and the area between the toes.



**Ice between the toes hurts!**

Examine your pet's paws when he comes in from outdoors. Ice balls can cling to the fur. Wash his paws with warm water to remove ice plus any salt. Look for any cracked pads and treat them if needed. You can use a product to protect and toughen his pads. Some pets will allow you to put booties on them, and they'll even leave them on!

Precautions to take during the winter include keeping all chemicals cleaned up and put away. **Antifreeze is especially deadly.** Pet safe products are much better to use. You can also get a pet safe ice melt product.

One of the biggest dangers to cats during the cold weather is a car. **Cats will often try to keep warm under the hood.** When you start the car up, the cat can be severely injured or killed. Before you get in your car, bang on the hood to scare them off.



**Car engines are a warm place for cats to sleep.**

## FEAR, ANXIETY, STRESS

It's a scary world out there, and sometimes our pets need help dealing with it. **Keeping our pets happy and reducing stress improves their health.** The first step is learning the signs of stress. Our pets, especially cats, are great at hiding stress. Others show stress in ways that mimic other problems (such as having urinary accidents). Another thing to remember is that pets get stressed over different things than you or I. For example, you coming home 5 minutes late from work is usually no big deal but to your pet, it may be like the world is ending.



Signs of stress: ears back, wide eyes, showing the whites of the eyes



Cats show stress differently than dogs. Urinating outside the box is often related to stress.

Fortunately, there are several options for helping them. Try several to find what works best. If anxiety is an ongoing problem and the natural remedies are not enough for your pet, you may have to consider some anti-anxiety drugs. That is often the best choice for some pets and can make their lives much better.

### **Pheromones**

Pheromones are chemicals that animals use to communicate with each other. They will help in some stressful situations. Pheromones don't work instantly. They will take 5-10 min. to start working and may take 20-30 minutes. **Give your pet enough time** if you are using it for a specific stressful event (such as visiting the vet or someone coming to the house).

**Feliway® is for cats** and is the marking scent cats have on their face. When they rub their chins along something, they leave their mark behind saying it is theirs. When they smell Feliway®, it has the same effect. They think it's theirs, and they tend to calm down. Be sure to use enough of it so your cat encounters it throughout the house. When traveling, spray the carrier and put a bandana with Feliway® on your cat. It's available as a spray, a plug-in room diffuser, or a collar.



Put the plug-in diffuser in your cat's favorite area and near litter boxes.



Many dogs do well wearing bandanas sprayed with Adaptil.

**Adaptil™ is for dogs** and is the scent from mother dogs. Dogs of all ages can respond though the amount of calming will vary depending on the individual dog. Usually, the heavier the concentration is, the better the results. Spray a bandana (at least 5 pumps) and put it on your dog. You can also rub it on his chest. Reapply it often as the scent dissipates. The room plug-in may help but doesn't work as well on its own unless you have a plug-in diffuser in each room of the house (and keep the windows shut). Adaptil™ collars are also available. Remember, more is better with this product.

## Body Wraps

Wrapping material around your pet can help calm him. **The slight pressure on the body produces a calming effect, similar to swaddling babies.** We don't understand exactly why it works, but it can be a tremendous help for some pets.

Use wraps for many different situations including noises such as thunderstorms and fireworks, for traveling, and when pets are upset at other animals outside leading to excessive barking or hissing. Wraps will also help some pets that are afraid of people or other animals, with some aggression or chewing problems, and for nervous or hyperactive pets. The list of uses is endless. **Many behavior problems have an underlying anxiety so try a body wrap for any situation.** It can also help some puppies and dogs focus better during training.

Thundershirt® is one commercial brand but there are others. To be effective, be sure to read the instructions and use them correctly. Make sure you have a correct fit as looks can be deceiving. If you purchase it from a pet store, you can usually have your pet try it on. If you buy directly from the company,



Simple body wrap using an Ace bandage.

Thundershirt® has a great exchange system.



Most cats will adjust to a Thundershirt (after the initial "flop and freeze").

You can also find directions for wrapping your pet with an Ace bandage. It needs to be snug but not tight. If you wrap a bandage around the back legs be sure there's not too much pressure on the inside. Sores can develop there if bandages are too tight.

## Herbs and Supplements

Many herbal and supplement products have calming effects. We carry some, and you can find some in stores. Since each pet is an individual, you will need to try them to see what works best for you pet.

**Lavender** has a calming effect. **However, the oil is poisonous if eaten.** Put some oil on a cotton ball and rub it onto a carrier for traveling or on furniture in the house. It doesn't need to smell strong to be effective.



Lavender oil is a more concentrated smell but do NOT let your pet eat it.



We formulate the best recipe for each pet.

**Bach Flower Remedies** are extracts from flowers. There are 38 different ones with different effects. Many will help with fear and anxiety. **They are easy to give and very safe** but you need to figure out which ones to use. We can do the work for you and combine several of them to meet your pet's needs.

**Melatonin** will help some dogs who are afraid of thunderstorms or have other noise phobias. It works best if given 30 min. or more before the storm hits. Give it when there is a forecast for storms, especially if you will be away from home.



**L-theanine** is an amino acid that can relieve anxiety. It's best to use a pet product that has it in it. We carry a few products, including a prescription food, containing L-theanine.



Older dogs may be anxious about a car ride because it hurts their joints.

Just like people, **stress in pets can cause physical problems** if it lasts too long or occurs too often. If you have tried things and nothing seems to help, or if your pet has other signs, have your pet examined to make sure there's no physical reason for the anxiety. Pain, or the anticipation of pain, can be a silent cause of anxiety.



## CONCLUSION

We hope you have enjoyed this book. All of us at Loving Paws Pet Clinic want to help you learn everything possible about your pet. You can make the best decisions if you have the right knowledge.

For more information, visit our website [www.lovingpawspetclinic.com/resources](http://www.lovingpawspetclinic.com/resources).

***Loving Paws Pet Clinic***  
***Loving pets is what we do!***



Dr. Arrin Colgan and Clipper

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