



PALO ALTO HUMANE SOCIETY

Helping animals through intervention, education, advocacy

FIRST AID FOR ANIMALS

FIRST AID KIT

To prepare your animals for a natural disaster, store the following first aid items in a protected area, in a portable container such as a plastic bin or a trash can with a lid.

- Gauze pads
- Gauze roll and/or bandages
- Roll of cloth tape
- Medical adhesive tape
- Scissors
- Thermometer
- Tweezers
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Antibiotic ointment
- Petroleum jelly
- Cotton-tipped sticks (such as Q-Tips)
- Instant cold pack
- Rags and rubber tubing for tourniquet
- Muzzle
- Animal first aid book

Vital statistics

Pulse rate

The normal resting pulse for a cat is 120–200 beats per minute (bpm).

The normal resting pulse for a dog depends on its size:

- Small dogs: 90–120 bpm
- Medium dogs: 70–110 bpm
- Large dogs: 60–90 bpm

Your animal's pulse should be strong, regular, and easy to locate.

The easiest place to locate a pulse is the femoral artery in the groin area. Place your fingers on the inside of the hind leg, and slide your hand upward until the back of your fingers touch the

abdomen. Gently move your fingers back and forth on the inside of the hind leg until you feel the pulsing blood. Count the number of pulses in 15 seconds and multiply that number by four to get the number of beats per minute (bpm).

Temperature

The normal temp for both dogs and cats is 100–102.5 degrees.

The thermometer should be almost clean when it's removed. Any sign of blood, diarrhea, or black, tarry stools is abnormal and should be checked by a veterinarian.



BASIC FIRST AID PROCEDURES FOR DOGS AND CATS

All of the following situations require immediate veterinary care.

Fracture

- Muzzle the animal.
- Gently lay the animal on a board, wooden door, or other firm object padded with blankets to make a stretcher.
- Secure the animal to the stretcher. One way is to cover its torso with spare clothing, then wrap duct tape or other strong tape around the stretcher and the clothing. If you don't have any spare clothing handy, fold the tape in half, sticky parts together, where it crosses the animal's body. Either method will hold the animal in place without the tape sticking to its fur.
- Do not attempt to set the fracture.
- If a limb is broken, wrap the leg in cotton padding, then wrap with a magazine, rolled newspaper, towel, or two sticks. This splint should extend one joint above the fracture and one joint below. Secure it with tape. Make sure the wrap doesn't constrict the blood flow in the limb.
- If the spine, ribs, hip, or other part of the torso appears injured or broken, gently place the animal on the stretcher. Immobilize it using the wrapping technique described above.

External bleeding

- Muzzle the animal.
- Press a thick gauze pad over wound. Hold the pad firmly until clotting occurs.
- If bleeding is severe, apply a tourniquet between the wound and the heart. Loosen the tourniquet for 20 seconds every 15–20 minutes.
- A tourniquet is dangerous and should only be used in life-threatening hemorrhaging of a limb. It may result in disability of the limb, or damage requiring amputation.

Internal bleeding

- Look for these symptoms:
 - Bleeding from the nose, mouth, or rectum
 - Coughing up blood
 - Blood in the urine
 - Pale gums
 - Collapse
 - Rapid or weak pulse
- Keep the animal as warm and quiet as possible until you can get it to a veterinarian.

Chemical burns

- Muzzle the animal.
- Flush the affected area immediately with large quantities of cold water.

Fire, steam, or hot liquid burns

- Muzzle the animal.
- Quickly apply ice water compresses.
- Treat for shock if necessary.

Shock

Shock often accompanies severe injury or extreme fright.

- Look for these symptoms:
 - Weak pulse
 - Shallow breathing
 - Nervousness
 - Dazed appearance.
- Keep the animal restrained, quiet, and warm until you can get it to a veterinarian.
- If the animal is unconscious, keep its head level with the rest of its body.



BASIC FIRST AID PROCEDURES FOR BIRDS

All of the following situations require immediate veterinary care.

Fractures

Wing fracture

- Restrain the bird by wrapping it in a towel, or slipping it into a sock from which the toe has been cut off.

Leg fracture

- Restrain the bird by wrapping it in a towel or slipping it into a sock from which the toe has been cut off, leaving the leg exposed.
- Splint the leg with two pieces of medical adhesive tape placed perpendicularly to the leg across the break site.

Bleeding

Broken “blood” feather (new feather)

- Pull the feather out gently. Bleeding should decrease.
- Press your finger on the removal site until the bleeding stops.

Wound or broken nail

- Apply pressure to the site with your finger(s). Bleeding should decrease.
- Apply “Quik Stop” powder or styptic to stop the bleeding. If you don’t have either of those items available, in an emergency you can use flour or cornstarch.

Puncture wounds

- Wrap the bird in a towel, or slip it into a sock from which the toe has been cut off.
- Get the bird to a veterinarian as soon as possible. Antibiotics are required to prevent infections from punctures.



HANDLING AN INJURED ANIMAL

Any animal that is injured or in pain may bite or scratch you.

Even the friendliest of pets must be handled with care for the safety of all involved.

If you are accidentally bitten or scratched, seek medical attention. Both dog and cat bites can become infected quickly!

If your animal is injured, you must restrain it for your safety as well as its own. Muzzle your pet to restrain it unless it is unconscious, has difficult breathing, or has a mouth injury.

Restraint methods for dogs

To muzzle your dog:

- Speak and move calmly and quietly.
- Have someone restrain the dog with a leash.
- Approach the dog from the side and behind its head. Do not attempt to put a muzzle on from the front.
- Quickly slip a nylon or wire cage muzzle over the nose, then secure it snugly behind the ears.

If a muzzle is not available, you can make one from a strip of gauze, rag, necktie, belt, or rope about 3 feet long.

- Make a large loop in the center of the length.
- Quickly slip the loop over your dog’s nose.
- Bring the ends of the length under the dog’s chin and tie them snugly behind the ears.

Restraint methods for cats

To muzzle your cat:

- Speak and move calmly and quietly.
- Have someone restrain the cat by holding the scruff of its neck firmly. This does not hurt the cat; it just prevents it from moving.
- Working from behind the cat, quickly slip a nylon muzzle over its face. The muzzle will cover most of the cat’s face, including the eyes. Secure snugly behind the head.

If you are alone, scruff the cat with one hand and put the muzzle over the cat’s face with the other. Slide both hands along the muzzle straps, and secure behind the head.

If a muzzle is not available, one can be made with a rag or a strip of gauze. Make sure that it is carefully placed over the cat's mouth and securely fastened, as cats can escape from these temporary muzzles.

Other restraint methods:

- Most cats can be restrained by holding the scruff of the neck.
- Wrap the cat in a towel, making sure that its front legs are secured against the body so that it can't scratch you.
- A commercial cat-restraint product called a "Cat Sack" can be used for fractious or very frightened cats. Slip the sack over your cat from tail to head, then zip up the appropriate zippers.

Gloves are not recommended for handling cats. They reduce your dexterity, and a cat's teeth can easily penetrate them anyway.

Restraint methods for birds

- Carefully wrap the bird in a towel, gently folding its wings against the body. Keep your hands away from the bird's beak.

Gloves are not recommended for handling birds. They reduce your dexterity, and strong beaks can easily penetrate them anyway.

Restraint methods for reptiles and small mammals

- Wrap the animal in a towel or rag, gently folding its legs against the body.

Materials produced by the Palo Alto Humane Society in conjunction with the American Red Cross Northern California Disaster Preparedness Network

